

Cities eye solutions to end street violence

By Saeed Shabazz

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK (NNPA) — The Big Apple is one of several east coast cities grappling with a serious problem: Violence is up and community and political leaders are searching for answers to the growing crisis.

The Consumer Affairs and Public Safety Committees of the New York City Council held a joint oversight hearing at City Hall Oct. 20 that focused on the sale of gang paraphernalia and its role in the proliferation of gang culture and violence in the city.

Hearing participants debated banning the sale of gang affiliated clothing as a way to curb violence. City hall hearings last December revealed clothing retailers were openly selling hats and shirts broadcasting gang colors, symbols and advocating philosophies such as "Don't Snitch."

Earlier this year, a detective from the Brooklyn District Attorney's office was able to purchase a Yankee baseball cap with a Bloods street gang symbol, while another detective was given the opportunity to select a gang insignia from a catalog and have it embroidered onto a hat.

The detective testified at the city council hearing that a store employee warned the cap would identify him as a member of the Bloods.

Detectives also told hearing participants that gang-related apparel was priced

higher than regular clothing.

A 2007 survey conducted by the office of the NYC Public Advocate found that nearly half of city school children said gangs were a problem where they lived and two-thirds noticed gang colors in their schools.

"The sale of these items is irresponsible on all levels," said Councilman Leroy Comrie, chairman of the Consumer Committee.

"We must protect people who either knowingly or unknowingly buy these products, whose lives could be put in danger if they wear them in the wrong neighborhood," added Councilman Peter Vallone, chairman of the Public Safety Committee.

NYPD reported there have been 377 murders in the city through September 2008 versus 344 during the same period in 2007. Shootings are up in 2008, 1,420 to 1,324 in 2007. NYPD said murders and shootings have increased by over 10 percent.

Police said guns are commonplace on the streets, particularly among youth. One of the city's answers to gun violence has been a \$100,000 program known as "Guns for Cash." NYPD reported Oct. 26 that five Harlem churches collected 500 guns, while two weeks earlier Brooklyn churches collected 400 guns. Those who turned in guns received a \$200 bank card.

Dr. Albert Griffith, a Newark-based clinical psychologist told *The Final Call* going after stores that sell gang-related apparel and the

manufacturers that make the gear would not solve the street gang problem. "The call to ban the clothing is foolish," Dr. Griffith said. He said there is a divide between those who wear the colors and those that actually do the shooting.

"There are the hard core gang members that have records and are well known by the police; they don't necessarily wear colors, but they are shooters," Dr. Griffith stressed.

"I find that as I go through the Youth House in Newark,

"The call to ban the clothing is foolish. There are the hard core gang members that have records and are well known by the police; they don't necessarily wear colors, but they are shooters."

— Dr. Albert Griffith

the 13-year-olds use the colors as a way of communicating with other teens, sort of a way to belong to something, a way to act out," Dr. Griffith added.

In Boston, Pastor Bruce H. Wall of the Global Ministries Christian Church called for a "community lockdown" for Halloween night, specifically in Dorchester's Codman Square neighborhood. "I would like to see 1,000 men in the streets citywide," the pastor said in an Internet message.

"In the past we have seen a rise in street violence on Halloween night such as the stabbing of a woman 130 times, and the killing of a nine-year-old boy," Pastor

Wall told *The Final Call*.

Boston has recorded its 49th homicide so far in 2008 compared to 58 overall in 2007, according to Boston police. There have also been 122 non-fatal shootings versus 132 non-fatal shootings in 2007. On Oct. 26, a 27-year-old Black man was shot three times in his driveway while placing a child's chair in his car. Two Black men were seriously wounded by gunfire on Oct. 15. Boston police reported that a lone gunman fired at least five rounds at the men.

Pastor Wall said he has been asking that a "state of emergency" be declared by the police department. Instead of getting support, Pastor Wall said he has been demonized and "cannot get the churches to stand up with me."

"Instead some of the pastors tell me I am messing up their relationship with the mayor," he added.

Calls to the mayor's office and the police commissioner had not been returned by press time.

There has also been attention paid to gang-related crime in the city of Boston, according to True C. Allah, an anti-gang activist. "You cannot control the wearing of

gang apparel, but there are small victories that can be won," he told *The Final Call*.

"We persuaded a young man who was selling the 'stop snitching' t-shirts to the stores to pull them off the shelves; and he did what we asked at a considerable financial loss," Allah said.

Newark, New Jersey's largest city, has become a killing field once again, according to activists. Five shootings were recorded over the weekend of Oct. 24. A young mother of three was caught in a crossfire, a 9-year-old was killed and a Central High School student was wounded.

Raz Baraka, Central High's principal, called a town hall meeting Oct. 27 at the school. He asked parents and concerned citizens to help patrol streets when the students are coming and going from the school.

"People were obviously frustrated by the reaction of the mayor and the police director, who said they had no concrete proposals for securing the students," said Andrea Hughie, youth director for the Peoples Organization for Progress.

The principal was also frustrated by the attitude displayed by city officials and turned to community and grassroots organizations to help secure his students,

Hughie said.

In interviews with the New Black Panther Party, Street Warriors and Stop Shootin', *The Final Call* was told more concrete proposals are needed to solve the problem, not just Band-aids.

"We are calling on people to reduce the violence through their own initiatives, what we are calling 'stop self-genocide.'" Ato-Bakari of the New Black Panther Party said.

Abdul Muhammad, head of Street Warriors, said the group has a three-pronged proposal to present to the community, which includes drug treatment programs, job training and more mental health services. A wider community meeting is planned to discuss how the community can take responsibility for stopping the violence without depending on city officials, Muhammad said.

"Our message to the community is that everyone must assist in the struggle and have a role in countering the conditions that are destroying our people," said Yusef Ismail, director of Stop Shootin' Inc. "We are planning to develop businesses that will be self-sustaining and to keep spreading our message through the 'Stop Shootin' logo," Ismail said.

Saeed Shabazz writes for *The Final Call*.

Youth

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successfully affect policies. This road won't be easy, but it's not impossible Fulton declared.

"Taking the energy that brought us to the polls in the first place is going to keep us engaged for the next four years," Ayers said.

"Making sure we're really paying attention to the policies that are really impacting young African-American lives."

Looking outside of the legislative lens, David Johns, an Education Policy Advisor for the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions said there are other ways to push for change. Another outlet, he said, is the media.

"It might sound funny coming from a representative from the Hill, but I want us to look beyond legislation,"

Johns said. "Hold the media accountable. I think it's important for us to push the media away from being sensational and being more about education."

While Obama holds the highest position in the land, the entire weight of change doesn't rest on his shoulders. Change starts in local communities, according to D.C. Advisory Council representative Rebecca Thompson.

"It's what we do in our spare time; it's what we do on our weekend that's really going to matter and help him move forward in his agenda," Thompson said.

Before Obama's inauguration in January, Black Youth Vote! Coordinators are working to disburse an official agenda to state and local governments, the 111th Congress and the transition team.

But Black youth civic en-

agement won't end on Jan. 20.

"We need to continue to be about our business; advancing every agenda that each of us cares about,"

Johns said. "The work is not over, it wasn't over Nov 4, if won't be over Jan 20, it might not be over 2010. But we need to make sure we continue to do the work."

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LAS VEGAS-CLARK COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT
INVITATION TO BID
BID NO. 09-06
CLARK COUNTY LIBRARY EFFICIENCY REMODEL

NEVADA STATE LABOR COMMISSION PWP NUMBER: CL-2009-125

SCOPE OF WORK: Partial interior remodel of the existing Clark County Library.

ESTIMATED COST: \$761,474.00

PREBID CONFERENCE: A Prebid Conference will be held on Monday, December 1, 2008, 2:00 PM (PST), in the Conference Room at the Clark County Library, 1401 E. Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, NV 89119. The purpose of the Prebid Conference is to review the contract and specification documents and tour the job site.

BID OPENING: The bid opening will be held Friday, December 19, 2008, 11:00 AM (PST), in the Multi-purpose Room at the Las Vegas Library, 833 Las Vegas Boulevard North, Las Vegas, Nevada 89101.

Bids will be accepted at the Reception Desk of the Las Vegas Library, 833 Las Vegas Boulevard North, Las Vegas, NV 89101 on or before 11:00 AM (PST), Friday, December 19, 2008. Bids received at 11:01 AM (PST) or after will be returned unopened to the bidder.

Bidders and other interested parties are invited to attend the bid opening.

Contractors must be qualified to bid in accordance with NRS 338.1382 at the time of bid opening.

Specifications and drawings will be available, for pick up only, after 11:00 AM (PST), Monday, November 24, 2008 at the Business Office, 4th Floor, Las Vegas Library, 833 Las Vegas Boulevard North, Las Vegas, Nevada 89101. The first set of specifications and drawings will be provided at no charge; additional sets may be purchased for a non-refundable charge of \$30.00 per set. All checks are to be made payable to LVCCLD. If paying by cash, exact change is required.

To request a faxed copy of this Invitation to Bid notice, call the Clark County Fax on Demand System at (702) 455-5428 and request document #501.

Questions regarding this Invitation to Bid may be directed to Stephen J. Rice, General Services Director, telephone number (702) 507-3740.

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