



September 21, 2020

The Honorable Eric Garcetti
 Mayor of Los Angeles
 200 North Spring Street
 Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re. Investment in Gang Intervention to Broaden LA’s Community-Based Public Safety Efforts

Dear Mayor Garcetti,

We thank you for your continued leadership through these challenging times in our city and country. This letter serves as a follow up to the original request letter submitted to your office on June 8th. The **Los Angeles Intervention Coalition (LAIC)**, comprised of 15 gang intervention agencies and groups, has been meeting weekly to refine the need requests of the intervention community. As you are aware, gang intervention workers have been steadfast as essential frontline workers during the pandemic and amid calls to reimagine public safety. **In light of the recent police shooting deaths of Andrés Guardado and Dijon Kizzee and the shooting of two LASD deputies, gang intervention has been working 24/7 to maintain peace among protestors and law enforcement, while balancing urgent calls for justice and needs of residents in both the City and County areas.** Gang intervention has stretched far beyond their violence prevention role to provide public health information and PPE to residents in viral hotspots, provide support for distribution of Angeleno cards, and distribute food to families in desperate need.

During this critical time when cities and law enforcement agencies are “reimagining public safety”, we know and demonstrated the effectiveness of gang intervention services as a crucial part of a community-based public safety response. The Los Angeles safety strategy has been one of the largest investments in non-traditional, community-centered approaches in the nation for over a decade. Recent data released by the Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) has demonstrated a 41.2% reduction in gang-related retaliatory homicides and aggravated assaults in the South Los Angeles study region from 2014–2017.¹ These reductions have generated an estimated savings to the criminal justice system from prevented gang retaliations amounts to approximately \$11.5 million per year (in 2018 dollars).²

Gang intervention agencies and workers have made tremendous efforts to ensure city-wide public safety, through the development of professional understandings with LAPD to lower potential violence. From 2010 to 2019, the homicide rate in the city has remained below 300 which aligns with the launch of the city’s comprehensive violence reduction strategy in 2008.³ Compared to a devastating 1,092 homicides in 1992.

¹ Brantingham, P.J., Park, J., & Schoenberg, F.P. (2020). Further exploration on the impact of the GRYD Incident Response Program on retaliatory violence (GRYD Research Update No. 1). Los Angeles, CA: California State University, Los Angeles, 6.

² Ibid, 6.

³ https://www.lapdonline.org/statistical_data

⁴ LA Times: [Crime in LA dropped again in 2019. Police credit community outreach & gang intervention](#); 12/31/19

These efforts have saved the City millions of dollars over a 12-year period. On December 31, 2019, Chief Moore credited the city's low crime numbers to gang intervention and work with the GRYD office.⁴

Again, Los Angeles has led the country in building a sustainable comprehensive violence reduction strategy like nowhere else in the nation. Gang intervention has a demonstrated track record of saving lives and unnecessary costs associated with the criminal justice system including closing many of the on ramps to gang membership. As the country reimagines what a broader, more comprehensive public safety system looks like, we believe Los Angeles can be the national leader forging a new path. This would be a step in the right direction to significantly improve safety, community wellbeing, and trust in LA's communities of color, which cannot and has not been achieved by law enforcement alone.

We appreciated the opportunity to meet with you on June 15th to share our perspectives on what was needed to bolster safety efforts. **We have reached out to and met with several council offices throughout the city to discuss our needs and ask for the necessary investment to expand and strengthen our efforts as peacemakers.** The undersigned reflect the multiple gang intervention agencies and groups serving the City to ensure safety and health during these challenging times. We have refined our requests and drafted a budget to concretize our funding amount to **\$54,000,000**. Therefore, we strongly advocate for the following from the portion that will be cut from the LAPD and other City budgets:

- 1. Salary Adjustment & Hazard Pay for Intervention Workers:** Since GRYD's inception in 2008, intervention workers have not received significant pay raises nor cost of living increases in recognition of our work. Gang intervention workers provide support 24 hours a day shouldering a high level of risk and stress yet have not received the appropriate compensation over the last decade. Therefore, we call for a salary adjustment requiring a minimum annual salary of \$45,000 plus benefits for gang intervention workers including 25% increase. Currently, workers are making just above living wage yet are exposed to high rates of stress, trauma, and death daily while working to deescalate neighborhood conflicts. Hazard pay means additional pay for performing hazardous duty or work that causes extreme physical discomfort and distress which is not adequately alleviated by protective devices and is deemed to impose a physical hardship. Therefore, like other essential workers in the city, we call for hazard pay in recognition of our dangerous work.
 - 2. The City Needs Additional Intervention Workers & Peace Ambassadors:** Intervention agencies need to hire additional support to further decrease violence and increase public safety which requires a significantly larger workforce that is not reliant on law enforcement alone. Additionally, intervention workers have a significant role in providing hospital-based and school-based services throughout the city. As L.A. schools end reliance on School Resource Officers, intervention workers can fill that role to ensure community-led school safety on and off campus. Therefore, we call for increasing the workforce from 120 to 500 intervention workers and from 10 to 250 peace ambassadors to reinforce the role of trusted community leaders of color in achieving increased public safety.
 - 3. Agencies Need Funding for Access to Unrestricted & Rapid Response Funds:** Flexible funds to address and support community needs are crucial for intervention agencies. Intervention workers frequently encounter delays in receiving appropriate resources to offer support to clients and many times pay out of their own pockets to support program participants. Therefore, we call for access to a pot of flexible funds to rapidly respond to urgent community needs. Additionally, consider providing block grants to advocacy organizations to support and distribute smaller scale funds directly to agencies or via foundation partnerships.
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4. **Agencies Need Funding for Supportive Services for Intervention & Sustainable Community Resources:** Intervention workers have increased risk and trauma exposure given the nature of their work. We call for investment in specific counseling and psychological services for peacemakers to support and sustain ourselves in this vital work. Additionally, intervention agencies lack adequate funding to effectively engage the broader community to address economic needs. We call for increased investment in workforce development (career/job training) services for the larger community.
5. **Funding to Enhance Programming for Participants & Families & Capacity Building for Intervention Agencies:** Intervention agencies need to hire case managers, therapists and clinicians to support participants and families. Small stipends should be provided to enrolled participants to provide some incentive for services and financial relief. Funds should also be made available for agencies to directly help families with victim services, mental health, and financial needs. Investment in the development and capacity-building of agencies will help to increase effectiveness of service delivery. Specific funds should be made available through foundation partnerships or block grants to intermediary organizations.
6. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Stock for Intervention Workers & Clients:** The credibility and trust gang intervention workers maintain in the community positions us to distribute PPE to the highest need communities in Los Angeles. Additionally, as frontline workers with higher risk exposure we must ensure we have access to clean, high quality PPE to protect ourselves and our families. Therefore, we call for investment in stockpiling PPE for all intervention organizations given the current and anticipated second wave of COVID-19 cases this fall.
7. **Expansion of GRYD Infrastructure:** Given the central role of the GRYD office to effectively administer funds directly community-based organizations and lead current violence reduction and non-law enforcement safety strategies, we call for increased investment in the GRYD infrastructure to support and oversee the bolstering of public safety efforts. We ask that GRYD continue to provide the necessary core operational support to intervention and prevention agencies in partnership with a private foundation to administer flexible funds for additional supportive services and incentives, capacity-building, financial relief, PPE, and development of sustainable community resources.

As Los Angeles and the rest of the country broadens their public safety infrastructure, gang intervention continues to have a significant role in ensuring safety for all residents of the City, particularly in low-income, communities of color who have faced the brunt of over-policing and neglect. Gang intervention are trusted intermediaries that not only keep the peace but support the needs LA's most marginalized communities. **The gang intervention skill set can also be leveraged to support the development of career pathways such as homeless outreach, city-wide school safe passage and student safety, contact tracing, mental health response, and community health work. These areas of work should be developed as additional career pathways to contribute to building a community-based public safety and health infrastructure and offer economic opportunity for residents to thrive.** The safety and well-being of communities of color in Los Angeles will not and has not been achieved through law enforcement alone.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to increase funding of the City's gang intervention workforce and non-traditional public safety efforts, to show the nation what is possible when we make investments in violence prevention a fundamental and essential priority. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Fernando Rejón, Executive Director
Urban Peace Institute (UPI)

Skipp Townsend, Executive Director
2nd Call

Kevin “Twin” Orange, Director
Advocates for Peace & Urban Unity (APUU)

Michelle Fuentes-Miranda, President & Founder
Alliance for Community Empowerment (ACE)

Daniel Mejia, Executive Director
Breaking Through Barriers To Success

William “Blinky” Rodriguez, Executive Director
Champions In Service

Jerald “Pee” Cavitt, Executive Director
Chapter TWO Community Intervention (Ch.2)

Ben “Taco” Owens, Executive Director/President
Detours Mentoring Group
Southern California Ceasefire Committee

Ansar Muhammad, Executive Director
HELPER Foundation

Michael Guedel, Executive Director
Resilient

Nathan Arias, President/CEO
Soledad Enrichment Action (SEA)

Paul Carrillo, Executive Director
Southern California Crossroads

Darlene Kiyan, Executive Director
Toberman Neighborhood Center

Bob Pratt, President
Volunteers of America Los Angeles

Cc:

Ana Guerrero, LA Mayor’s Office, Chief of Staff
Anne Tremblay, LA Mayor’s Office, GRYD Director