



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Organization:** Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center + Rosemary Anderson High School

**Contact:** Joe McFerrin II, President + CEO | **Phone:** 503-797-7222 | **Email:** jmcFerrinII@portlandoic.org

## PORTLAND NONPROFIT ADDRESSING ESCALATING VIOLENCE WITH INNOVATIVE “VILLAGE” PROGRAM

*Gun Violence Intervention and community support for Portland Youth*

**[Portland, OR – July 27, 2021]** In response to the escalating violence, POIC + RAHS is launching the Public Safety Village (The Village) during summer 2021. Through the Village, POIC + RAHS is activating and supporting a group of 11 grassroots, Black-led organizations led by individuals who have been impacted by or involved in community violence in the past. Nonprofits will expand their ability to provide important engagement services for youth and families while participating in personal restorative justice; these messengers once brought harm to the community and are now dedicated to healing it.

And programming like this has been successful in the past. In the nineties, Portland was served by several grassroots, community organizations focused on youth violence intervention. This included House of Umoja, Urban League of Portland, Youth Employment Institute (YEI), Brothers and Sisters Keepers (BSK), Minority Youth Concerns Action Program (MYCAP), Portland Youth Redirections, Albina Youth Opportunity Services, and Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center (POIC). Their approaches were highly effective, and local community violence was greatly reduced, including gun violence. As violence decreased, so did the funding available to these organizations, and one by one they were dissolved (apart from POIC and Urban League).

Today, Portland is experiencing substantially elevated rates of community violence. According to a report released by the City of Portland, an injury shooting with two suspects costs over one million dollars in infrastructure expenses, from police to hospitalization to incarceration. As of June 30, 2021, 567 gun violence incidents had been reported, including a 300% increase in injury and homicide shootings in North Portland.

These tragedies are extremely disheartening and further highlight the need for significant, swift, and coordinated action – from POIC + RAHS, our partners, our local leaders, and the community. POIC + RAHS CEO and President Joe McFerrin II shared, *“We know it takes a village. This is not about growing POIC; this is about growing capacity for other local organizations committed to and passionate about this work.”*

The Village will provide direct services to Portland youth while each organization participates in training (focused on fundraising, marketing, etc.) to help ensure their longevity. Participating organizations will fill local gaps in violence intervention services by providing cognitive behavioral therapy, conflict resolution, recreation opportunities, youth grief/loss support groups, decision-making skill-building, and more.

We anticipate this will have a direct, immediate effect on community violence in Portland. This effort has already garnered generous support from Multnomah County’s Community Justice Department, the City of Portland’s Office of Violence Prevention, and The Oregon Community Foundation.

Marcy Bradley, Program Officer for Black Student Success at The Oregon Community Foundation, shared, *“Oregonians are fortunate to have proven programs in Multnomah County who are reflective of the community and equipped to lead this effort. POIC + RAHS and the Public Safety Village have emerged from decades of experience and deep relationships with the community and our young people. It’s exciting to see youth receive the opportunities they need to thrive. The Village will be an important part of healing for children and families as they overcome the negative impacts of COVID, community violence, and related crises.”*

For more information about our community partners, please visit their websites: [Going Home II](#), [African Youth & Community Organization \(AYCO\)](#), [National Association of Minority Contractors, Oregon \(NAMCO\)](#), [Word is Bond PDX](#), [FaithBridge LLC](#), [STARS Mentoring](#), [Building Blocks 2 Success](#), and more!

### **About POIC + RAHS**

POIC + RAHS is committed to the success of at-risk youth and adults, providing the highest quality services in education, mentoring, family outreach, employment training, and placement. Over 50 years ago, POIC + RAHS was founded to provide culturally specific workforce training and career placement to counter discriminatory practices keeping people of color unemployed, underemployed, and unable to build wealth. Today, POIC + RAHS provides a continuum of education, career, and family services. From reintroducing houseless teens to the classroom to pairing gang-affected students with meaningful education and career opportunities – POIC + RAHS helps youth and young adults reimagine and rewrite their life stories. Learn more on our website: <https://www.portlandoic.org/>

###