



A CALL TO ACTION

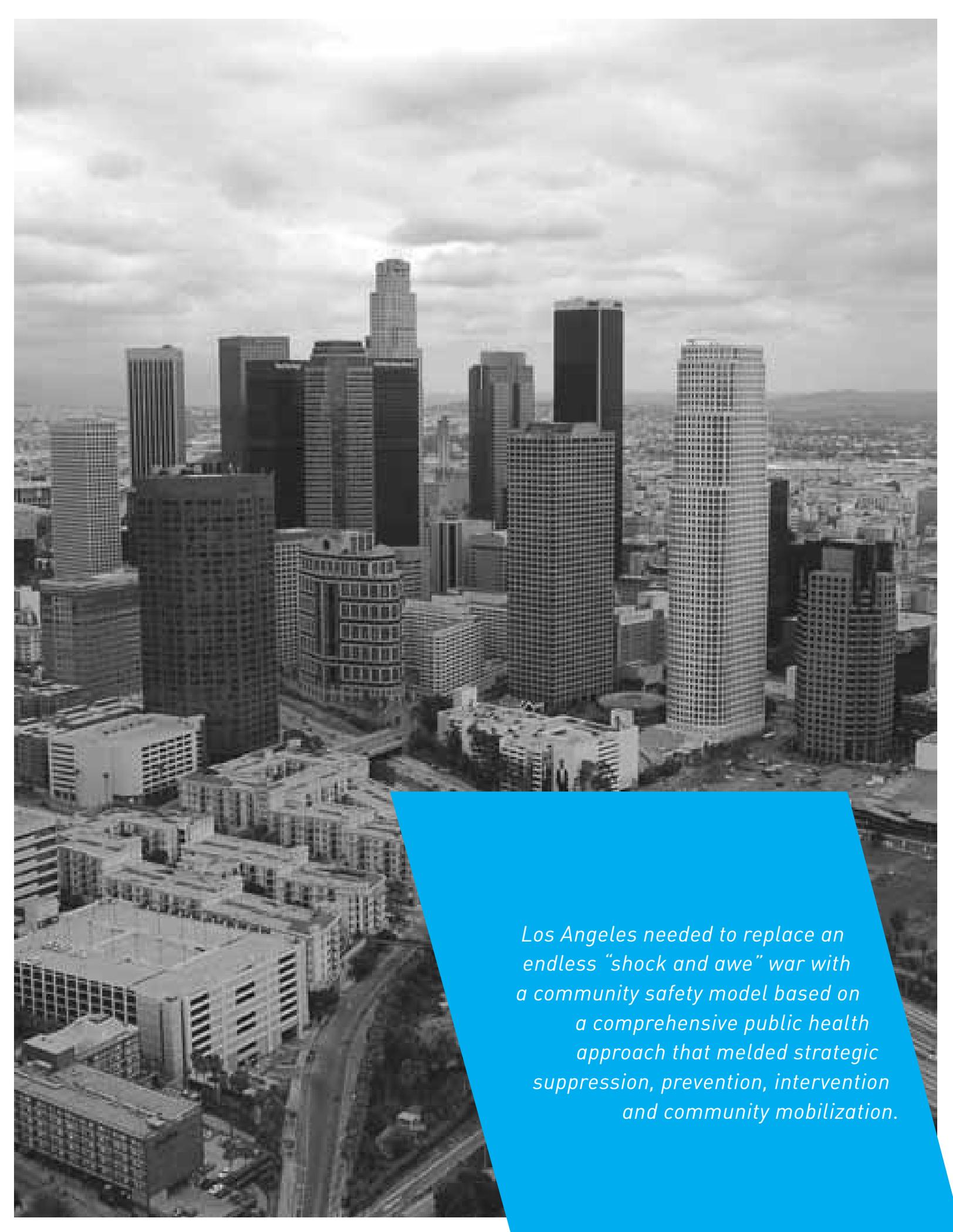
LOS ANGELES' QUEST TO
ACHIEVE COMMUNITY SAFETY



ADVANCEMENT PROJECT is a public policy change organization rooted in the civil rights movement. We engineer large-scale systems change to remedy inequality, expand opportunity and open paths to upward mobility. Our goal is that members of all communities have the safety, opportunity and health they need to thrive.

Our signature is reach and impact. With our strong ties to diverse communities, unlikely alliances, policy and legal expertise, and creative use of technology, we and our partners have won over \$15 billion to extend opportunity. Whether it is to build 150 schools, transform the City of Los Angeles' approach to its gang epidemic, or revolutionize the use of data in policymaking, Advancement Project evens the odds for communities striving to attain equal footing and equal treatment.

The URBAN PEACE PROGRAM at Advancement Project reduces and prevents community violence, making poor neighborhoods safer so that children can learn, families can thrive and communities can prosper. A new approach to preventing community violence, Urban Peace applies public health methods to understand the underlying reasons for violence and creates innovative, holistic ways to change the conditions that lead to them.

An aerial, black and white photograph of the Los Angeles skyline. The image shows a dense cluster of skyscrapers in the center, with a mix of modern glass buildings and older, more solid structures. The city extends to the horizon under a cloudy sky. In the bottom right corner, there is a large, bright blue triangular graphic that contains white text.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On January 17, 2007, the Advancement Project Urban Peace program released the groundbreaking report, *A Call to Action: A Case for a Comprehensive Solution to L.A.'s Gang Violence Epidemic (A Call to Action)*.¹ *A Call to Action* explained why Los Angeles' 30-year "war on gangs" had failed to quell either gangs or gang violence.

SIX TIMES AS MANY GANGS & TWICE AS MANY GANG MEMBERS

Based on exhaustive research by 45 subject matter experts,² including law enforcement, *A Call to Action* documented that after spending \$25 billion dollars on a 30-year "war on gangs", the County of Los Angeles had six times as many gangs, increasing gang violence, and gang participation that had mushroomed to more than 100,000 active members.

This massive failure could be seen as a warning that we needed a completely new strategy. The report concluded that Los Angeles needed to replace this endless "shock and awe" war with a community safety model based on a comprehensive public health approach that melded strategic suppression, prevention, intervention and community mobilization.

Instead of mainly re-arresting the same gang members, the City and County also needed robust efforts designed to keep the 850,000 children trapped in Los Angeles County's gang zones safe. As then Los Angeles Police Department Chief of Police William Bratton said, **"We cannot arrest our way out of the gang crisis. We need to do the full agenda laid out in *A Call to Action*."**

Since the tremendous media frenzy in the wake of the 2007 release of *A Call to Action*, Los Angeles has been on an unprecedented quest – an extraordinary experiment to find out what it takes to keep children safe in the worst gang zones. This report is a look back at the five years of work propelled by *A Call to Action*; a check on the progress L.A. has made; and presents a vision for building on current gains to achieve the final stages of comprehensive public safety in the places where children still suffer chronic exposure to trauma and violence.

THE TURNING POINT

With over 100 recommendations, *A Call to Action* revolutionized Los Angeles City's struggle with gang violence. The *Los Angeles Times* hailed the report as "A Marshall Plan for L.A. Gangs";³ local papers kept the report in the headlines for several weeks; and dozens of television crews sought interviews with its authors. The report hit a nerve: It arrived during a time when end-of-year gang crime statistics appeared, showing gangs spreading to previously gang-free middle class enclaves like the San Fernando Valley, which suffered a 43% increase in gang crime in 2006.⁴

The report also showcased, for the first time, an army of unlikely allies of police officials, prosecutors, and department heads joining with community advocates, gang interventionists, educators, and medical and public health professionals – all standing behind one vision and calling for large scale change. LAPD Chief William Bratton stated that *A Call to Action* "changed how the City of Los Angeles dealt with its gang crisis – much for the better," and City Controller Laura Chick noted, "If not for that report, we'd still be banging our heads against a wall and repeating the same failures every year."

FIVE YEARS LATER

Five years later, in 2011, the City has a surprisingly successful story to tell about gang violence reduction, with gang-related crime reduced by over 15% and 35% fewer gang-related homicides in neighborhoods served by the Mayor's

Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development's (GRYD) summer violence reduction strategy, Summer Night Lights. This turnaround began with *A Call to Action: A Case for a Comprehensive Solution to L.A.'s Gang Epidemic*, spearheaded by Urban Peace and its allies.

FROM WAR TO COLLABORATION: THE JOURNEY TO A NEW VIOLENCE REDUCTION MODEL

A Call to Action called for a revolutionary change from the City and all its violence reduction stakeholders, pushing for the adoption of a community-driven, **asset-based**^{5*} public health approach to violence – a comprehensive gang violence reduction model. Before *A Call to Action*, Los Angeles' police repeatedly arrested the same gang members in a wasteful "war on gangs", and **public sector** agencies and private funders pursued a fruitless, ad-hoc approach to gangs that may have had individual

program level success, but lacked impact on the overall scale of the problem. Many were doing good work that benefitted individuals, but nothing that could dent the culture or scope of the gang violence. Many of these efforts also focused on individual **at-risk** youth, and sometimes their families, but did not address the underlying conditions in the communities where they struggled to survive and in which succeeding generations were inculcated in gang culture.

"IF WE HAD BEEN DOING
WHAT THIS REPORT
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–STEVE COOLEY
District Attorney





Trust-building exercise at Community Safety Partnership training.

Accordingly, the subsequent work of Urban Peace’s program centered on creating innovative ways to apply what we coined the **Comprehensive Violence Reduction Strategy (CVRS)**. There are a number of violence reduction models applied across the country, each addressing disparate community violence factors.⁶ These violence reduction models have resulted in crime reductions and, in some instances, safer communities. Notwithstanding the success of these other approaches, we believe the CVRS presents the most exhaustive and holistic framework.

Understanding that violence is a symptom of deeper conditions, the CVRS focuses on addressing the 10 root conditions of violence⁷ through five service elements: prevention, intervention, suppression, reentry, and the equitable distribution of resources. Moreover, the CVRS strategy operates under three guiding principles: community-based and culturally competent service delivery, data-driven policy making, and built-in accountability. Unique to our strategy is the recognized need for not just violence reduction, but for sustainable, long-term paths to community transformation and health.

Within this framework, and with the goal of ensuring that A Call to Action’s recommendations were fully implemented, Urban Peace took on several roles:

- 1** Advocating for the implementation of the recommendations within the City and the Los Angeles Police Department.
 - 2** Building the capacity of all stakeholders to understand and execute the holistic, wrap-around strategy required by the CVRS.
 - 3** Providing training and tools for stakeholders, including the curriculum for the City’s Los Angeles Violence Intervention Training Academy (LAVITA), which serves law enforcement and gang interventionists.
 - 4** Convening stakeholders in different forums to ensure that the CVRS is broadly and deeply understood and that diverse, interested groups work toward the same goals.
 - 5** Building multi-jurisdictional collaboration to broaden the impact of the CVRS.
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ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The public health, wrap-around Comprehensive Violence Reduction Strategy (CVRS) has driven many of Los Angeles' achievements over the last five years; achievements that are the result of aggressive cooperation among disparate sectors and organizations.

These achievements include:⁸

- The Los Angeles City Council focused prevention and intervention funding in violence **hot zones**, as opposed to dividing funds evenly among all 15 council districts, as had been the norm.
- The Los Angeles Police Department has transformed and continues to refine the way it deals with gangs, from a counter-productive, overbroad suppression approach to relationship-based, problem-solving policing showcased in the five year Community Safety Partnership project.
- The City of Los Angeles experienced dramatic reductions in crime and its lowest rate since the 1960s.
- The Urban Peace Academy launched, establishing the only rigorous training program for gang interventionists in the country that sets professional standards for the dangerous work of gang intervention.
- Urban Peace conducted drill-down community violence assessments in 19 communities, engaging over 5,000 individuals living and working in violence hot zones.
- The Urban Peace Academy trained over 1,200 gang interventionists and over 400 police officers to work together towards violence reduction.
- The Belmont Neighborhood Violence Reduction Collaborative launched, implementing the CVRS in a community focused on school safety.
- Urban Peace developed the *City of Los Angeles Community Safety Scorecard* that provides a ZIP code level analysis of safety, assigning a letter grade from A to F on a complex set of safety, school conditions, risk and protective factors in a community.
- Urban Peace released *A Framework for Implementing the CVRS in your Neighborhood* which provides concrete tools for communities, the public sector, and service providers to work together toward community safety.
- Urban Peace partnered with the Los Angeles County Probation Department to ensure that the 20,000 youth in their charge are no longer abused or neglected.



The City of Los Angeles established **THE MAYOR'S OFFICE OF GANG REDUCTION & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OFFICE (GRYD)** that created GRYD zones throughout the City in communities with the highest levels of violence. The GRYD office developed a family-centered conceptual model which includes 16 strategy approaches;⁹ the model informs all of GRYD's practices, including the Summer Night Lights (SNL) Program¹⁰. The GRYD milestones¹¹ included below resulted from its implementation of this conceptual model:

SECONDARY PREVENTION MULTI-GENERATIONAL FAMILY CENTERED PROGRAMS:

- 49.7% of current participants have reduced risk factors and negative behaviors below threshold levels.
- 23% of participants have decreased antisocial behavior.
- 29% decrease in lack of parental supervision among participants.
- 47.3% decrease in gang fights involving participants.
- 48% decrease in participant involvement in gang activities.

COMMUNITY & LAW ENFORCEMENT ENGAGEMENT:

- Assaults with a deadly weapon against law enforcement in GRYD zones have declined by 48% vs. 9% outside of GRYD zones.

INTERVENTION CRISIS RESPONSE:

- Since April 2011, GRYD staff, along with **gang intervention** workers and law enforcement, have responded to 2,386 incidents of violence inside and outside of GRYD zones.
- GRYD zones have experienced a 29.8% reduction in gang-related crime and a 42.4% reduction in shots fired.
- Homicides in GRYD zones have decreased by 50% more than reductions in the rest of the City.¹²

SUMMER NIGHT LIGHTS (SNL):¹³

- Between 2008-2011 there were approximately 1,804,800 visits made to the SNL parks.
- More than 1,137,424 meals have been served.
- Approximately 3,500 jobs were offered to at-risk individuals.

WHY L.A. IS SUCCEEDING

This unlikely, yet successful experiment has worked for several key reasons. First, local elected officials had the courage to take risks and reform "business as usual". For example, in order to carry out the "hot zone gang strategy", the City Council agreed to take resources and funds from districts with relatively low gang crime and redeploy them to districts with high gang crime – the gang "hot zones". These resources were sustained despite the fiscal crisis in the City and were augmented by innovative public-private partnerships with philanthropy and business.

The problem-solving and mission-oriented mentality of elected leaders, law enforcement, other public sector, and community groups removed the normal focus on

narrow interests and paved the way for the larger violence reduction strategy.

The creation of the GRYD office and the reform that has taken place within the Los Angeles Police Department, as well as the expansion of gang intervention workers' skills, have created a platform for cross-sector, multi-disciplinary collaboration and shared accountability to achieve public safety.

Neighborhood and data-driven strategies are lifting up the knowledge and leadership in communities and beginning to create community capacity to build and sustain safety solutions.

TIME FOR A NEW CALL TO ACTION

Despite amazing gains in violence reduction for the City of Los Angeles as a whole, there is still much left to do. We are not yet fully cured of this complex epidemic – the conditions that spawn and sustain gang violence remain largely unchanged in L.A.'s most vulnerable communities. We continue to require holistic, systemic, and politically difficult solutions. We must continue working to ensure that the CVRS is implemented at its full scale.

POVERTY 266,868 children living in poverty
COMMUNITY VIOLENCE 373,082 children living in violent crime areas
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE 43,623 children with abuse allegations
LACK OF SCHOOL ATTACHMENT 34,960 LAUSD suspensions

To meet the scale and scope of the need:¹⁴

- Continue to hold government accountable for providing basic safety for every child.
- All sectors must fully embrace a problem-solving approach.
- All stakeholders must act with the mission-outlook – without zeal and commitment shown by community advocates and LAPD the work will not succeed.
- All sectors must work toward eliminating the root conditions in communities that perpetuate violence and short change children's futures.
- The public sector must use public funds for community revitalization strategies.
- Key stakeholders must engage in meaningful, trustworthy collaboration: top-down, bottom-up, and side-to-side.
- A creative, nimble, entrepreneurial approach – employed by some City departments like GRYD – must be taken up by all departments that deal with issues of community violence and youth development.
- Investment in prevention, intervention, and reentry efforts must be scaled-up to meet the size of the need.
- Schools must become wrap-around community centers at the heart of community safety solutions.
- Law enforcement reform must persist with a continued focus on implementing strategic – not overbroad – suppression.
- Seize the opportunity presented by realignment to reform the California criminal justice system by permanently shifting away from mass incarceration and by developing a rehabilitative structure for those returning from incarceration.
- Given the racial diversity and demographic shifts in Los Angeles, initiatives aimed at solving protracted issues must observe the need for high multiracial and interracial understanding in order to deliver culturally competent services that truly address the problem.

All programs and initiatives must continue to employ interracially sophisticated and savvy leaders who embrace skilled assessments; use multi-disciplinary best practices; and enact evaluation-driven policies. We must not let our success in crime reduction thus far diminish the urgency of the continued need for further reductions in violence and in the culture of gangs in our communities.

As the mayoral election looms in 2013, a key question facing the City is whether the new mayor will visibly demonstrate his/her backing for a comprehensive public safety approach, garnering strategic partners from the private and the public sectors. This will be proven by making GRYD a permanent, independent institution that

is adequately resourced and with the political strength to tackle community conditions and supporting LAPD's continued transformation under its current leadership.

Ending the public safety inequity that renders gang violence hot zone communities invisible to the rest of Los Angeles means we must provide youth greater alternatives that preempt gang joining. Political will is necessary to pull together a truly comprehensive solution with real government-community partnerships at both the City and County level, tailored to yield and sustain results for each individual neighborhood.

Los Angeles cannot rest until every family and every child enjoy the first of all civil rights – safety – and the first of all freedoms – freedom from violence.

ENDNOTES

1. The report was commissioned in 2005 by the City of Los Angeles Ad-Hoc Committee on Gang Violence and Youth Development (Chairs, Councilmembers Martin Ludlow and Tony Cardenas).
2. The co-authors included Father Greg Boyle, Homeboy and Homegirl Industries; Gila Bronner, The Bronner Group; Maria Casillas, Families in Schools; Way-Ting Chen and Jennifer Li Shen, Blue Garnet Associates; Patti Giggans and Cathy Friedman, Peace Over Violence; Megan Golden and Jena Siegel, Vera Institute of Justice; Peter Greenwood, Ph.D.; Jorja Leap, Ph.D.; David Marquez, JDHM Consultants; Bill Martinez, MCRP; Cheryl Maxson, Ph.D.; Ali Modarres, Ph.D, The Pat Brown Institute, CSULA; Sgt. Wes McBride; Cecilia Sandoval, The Sandoval Group; Howard Uller; Billie Weiss, MPH, Southern California Injury Prevention Research Institute, UCLA.
3. McGreevy, Patrick. "Alarm on gangs sounded: An L.A. study calls for a Marshall Plan-style effort to give young people alternatives and stop the spread of crime into safe communities." Los Angeles Times 13 January 2007: Print. < <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/jan/13/local/me-gangs13> >
4. McGreevy, P., and Winton, Richard. "Effects of gang initiative mixed: The LAPD crackdown targeting key groups has stifled street crimes in South Los Angeles, but the problem is on the rise in the Valley." Los Angeles Times 24 March 2007: Print. < <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/mar/24/local/me-gangs24> >
5. Many of the bolded terms in this report that require an extended definition are defined in the Glossary, page 54.
6. Please refer to page 19 to read more about the Los Angeles Comprehensive Violence Reduction Strategy. To learn more about other models please refer to their corresponding websites.
7. See page 21 for the 10 root conditions of violence the Urban Peace team identified through extensive research and engagement in L.A. hot zone communities.
8. For more information on Advancement Project's Urban Peace work and successes please see our website at: < <http://v3.advancementprojectca.org/?q=ap-ca-urban-peace> >
9. The GRYD office, under the leadership of Deputy Mayor Guillermo Cespedes, developed an original, family centered conceptual model of gang violence reduction which informs all of its programs and practices. The model is described and explained in The City of Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development Comprehensive Strategy, Guillermo Cespedes and Denise Herz (December 2011).
10. Description of Summer Night Lights from the Mayor's website: "SNL is an anti-gang initiative that keeps parks open after dark—during the peak hours of gang activity—with free food and expanded programming." For more information please visit: < <http://mayor.lacity.org/issues/gangreduction/summernightlights/index.htm> >
11. Based on 2011 data.
12. Crime decrease for all GRYD zones communities has been calculated by the GRYD office with 2011 and 2007 LAPD crime data.
13. For violence reduction levels in the City's SNL parks in comparison to non-SNL sites, please see page 14.
14. Portion adapted from Connie Rice's autobiographical book, *Power Concedes Nothing, One Woman's Quest for Social Justice in America, from the Courtroom to the Kill Zones*. New York: Scribner A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc. 2012. Print.

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