

Centennial

Continuing the Struggle for Justice

NCCD

National Council on Crime and Delinquency

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October 21, 2011

Mayor Gayle McLaughlin
Mayor's Office
450 Civic Center Plaza
Richmond, CA 94804

Dear Mayor McLaughlin,

As the president of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD), I am writing about the altercation reported in the news that occurred in City Hall on October 14, 2011 in the Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) involving participants in the Peacemaker Fellowship. As news reports continue to discuss the local tension around the incident, I feel that it is important to highlight the outstanding efforts of the ONS and Devone Boggan, ONS's director, and express our support for the Peacemaker Fellowship.

NCCD has worked closely with Devone Boggan and the ONS on several projects. Most recently, Devone has served as the lead for Richmond on the California Cities Gang Prevention Project (CCGPN). Led by NCCD and our partners The National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, the CCGPN is a network of thirteen California cities dedicated to reducing youth violence through comprehensive efforts including prevention, intervention, as well as enforcement. The ONS's Peacemaker Fellowship program is a critical element of Richmond's comprehensive efforts.

The Peacemaker Fellowship was created to save lives—the lives of the Fellows as well as lives of community members. It works with young people identified as the “mostly likely to be involved in gun violence” in the city of Richmond. Given the nature of the work, the Fellowship Program includes some of the most high-risk young people in the community, and thus, the work is extremely challenging. These young people are attempting to overcome their own maladaptive behaviors as well as significant social disadvantages. Setbacks are to be expected when working with such a high-risk population and should not be overblown.

As a national organization, we at NCCD have observed and worked with the best street outreach programs across the country and can attest that Richmond's is

exceptional; it employs highly qualified, talented and expertly trained outreach workers. Street outreach is a critical component of a comprehensive violence prevention strategy. Like most such programs, ONS's focuses on prevention of gang involvement, prevention of retaliatory violence, and connections to community-based services. Richmond's program goes well beyond this broad outreach to the community; it delivers intensive rehabilitation to the City's most critically at-risk youth.

To participate in the Peacemaker Fellowship, each young man must make a commitment to remain free of gun-related activity. Fellows receive a stipend as they reach important goals. This single element of the multifaceted program has received particular scrutiny these last few days; it has been re-characterized as "paying killers." This sensationalized criticism is unwarranted. Incentivizing good behavior is a common practice: parents give their children allowances, employees earn higher paychecks for doing their job, and employers pay their staff to attend training and to seek graduate degrees. Ronald Fryer, a Harvard economist and MacArthur Fellow, recently published work in Time Magazine and in academic journals highlighting that money and other external rewards can be a gateway to "intrinsic motivation," the basis of ONS's Fellowship Program.

ONS's work is grounded in best practices and remains an extremely promising part of Richmond's response to violence. Having worked closely with Devone Boggan and his team, we at NCCD fully support the Office of Neighborhood Safety, its director, and the Fellows.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'AB' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Alex Busansky, President
National Council on Crime and Delinquency

CC: Richmond City Council
Bill Lindsay, Richmond City Manager
Devone Boggan, Director, Office of Neighborhood Safety

