



Center for Neighborhood Enterprise

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Media Statement Robert L. Woodson, Sr. President, Center for Neighborhood Enterprise

The recent flood of homicides has resulted in the same old suggestions. DC Police Chief Charles Ramsey has declared a crime emergency. The Mayor wants more money for police overtime and to lower the youth curfew. These are the same tired remedies that haven't worked before, so why would they work now?

First of all, the two ideas are contradictory. If police are locking up juveniles on the street, they are not locking up drug dealers. And increasing the number of offenses the police have to enforce simply neutralizes any potential benefit of extra overtime and more police on the street.

Most important, however, is that these are only external strategies. The war that must be fought is an internal one—a change inside the culture of the affected communities. Nine years ago, working with a community group, we demonstrated that the killing could be stopped in Benning Terrace, an area where there had been more than 50 murders in the previous two years. We did this by reaching the young people who were involved in the warfare and getting them to change their lives and their behaviors. There have been no crew-related murders in that area in the succeeding nine years.

The model of what was accomplished in Benning Terrace has been embraced in other cities, including Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, and Milwaukee. However, not once has the DC Mayor or Police Chief asked for a briefing to discuss how this done, nor have they responded to our calls. It seems that the DC government would rather fail with approaches with which they are comfortable rather than risk a solution they are unfamiliar with.

There are solutions available. There are people who know who is creating the violence. And there are grassroots leaders working in the neighborhoods who can reach them.

The Center for Neighborhood Enterprise was founded in 1981 to help residents of low-income neighborhoods address the problems of their communities. CNE provides training, technical assistance, and linkages to sources of support to effective community and faith-based programs. ##