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## **Increasing Rate of Black on Black Crime in Baltimore City**

This is my proposal for solutions to the above named problem, which is growing to catastrophic levels in the community. The rate of black on black crime in Baltimore city has been on the increase, necessitating an immediate solution to address. The proposal identifies the causes and effects of the crime, and comes up with practical suggestions to policy makers in the city. I have proposed practical solutions based on evidence from research, which if effectively implemented will achieve greatly in preventing and controlling the crime in the city.

As a member of this community, I have realized the increase in the number of crimes committed by blacks, particularly against other blacks. There is no month that passes without an incident of shooting or stabbing, where both the suspect and the victim are African Americans. The solution to the problem, as explained in the proposal lies in engaging the community in problem-oriented policing, including getting information from the affected communities, listening to the members of the community and engaging them in law enforcement. Education and awareness are necessary in ensuring success in these efforts, as explained further in the proposal. I believe that my well-researched proposal will offer some insights and way forward in dealing with this problem that has plagued the community.

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Abstract

The problem of increasing rate of black on black crime in Baltimore city is the focus of this evidence-based proposal. The city is among the most hit by the problem of crime perpetrated by blacks and on black victims. The impact of this crime is great in the community, affective individuals and the entire community. Socio-economic reasons for the increasing rate of the crime are discussed, including poverty and social isolation. Young black makes within the ages of 16-25 age bracket, are the most vulnerable and prone to violence, according to research evidence. Prevention of crime will involve empowering the young people within the community to achieve their potential and move past the socio-economic challenges facing them.

Education and awareness creation, as well as engagement of the youth will achieve greatly in preventing and controlling black on black crime in the city.

Introduction

Baltimore city is among the regions in America that are worst hit by crime, especially gun violence. While gunning down of unarmed blacks has been the topic of debate in the recent past, there is an even worse crime situation; gun and general violence committed by blacks against other blacks. The city

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is one where 90% of homicide suspects and 90% of victims are African-Americans. This is a major problem that necessitates urgent action to rid it of the crime and its related effects on the community. This paper is a proposal to the police chief Anthony Batts and Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake on some of the steps that can be taken to address this problem.

#### Effects of black on black crimes on the community

The solution to crime problems in society is founded on the fact that crime has major impact on individuals and affected communities. While crime in general has major negative impact on the community, black on black crimes has an even greater impact. Generally, blacks in the city have been perpetrating high rates of violence including homicide and other non-fatal shootings. Loss of life is one of the greatest costs; the community is losing productive youth to violence, both victims and perpetrators (Skogan, 1990). The costs and effects of the crime affect every member of the community to some extent. Other effects include costs incurred in medical costs, loss of income and property losses. There are also security expenses and costs in avoiding being victimized. Fear of crime is a major impact of black on black crimes in the community (Lemon, 2015).

Skogan (1990) suggests that crime leads to substantial cost to society, at a personal level, community level and even national level. In Baltimore city, like in other parts of the United States, criminal offenses such as black on black crimes cause a huge economic burden to the victims as well as the cost related to government expenditures on judicial and legal activities, police protection, and corrections. Law enforcement has to deal with arrest and incarceration of suspects of black on black crimes, which costs the

government a lot. The community takes up a considerable amount of the estimated \$15 billion in economic losses suffered by victims and the approximately \$179 billion in government expenses in the entire country (Lemon, 2015).

High levels of crime do not only impact the community economically. According to Skogan (1990), there are major impacts of crime in a particular region or community (see appendix 1 for places to avoid in Baltimore City). Among the major effects, besides direct loss of productivity, is damaging the community spirit, leading to neighborliness. Fear of crime leads the people to want to keep to themselves for being afraid of victimization. Such high rates of crime also lead to environmental poverty. This is because, once such a city is labeled a bad area, it becomes poor because most people become afraid of investing in such an area. This is especially expected in West and East Baltimore.

#### Reasons for the Rate of Black on Black Crimes in Baltimore

The violent incidents, including shootings and murder perpetrated by young African Americans never cease to shock the Baltimore City community. Generally, as Lemon (2015) argues, they are simply an element of the long trajectory of black on black violence, characteristically involving black males. The root of these intraracial crimes is a topic that has generated interest among scholars and policy makers. It appears as though the black males have no regard to the lives of their fellow blacks. Whether this is out of love for material possessions or hatred for their community members is a puzzle that should be unraveled to find lasting solutions.

Gun violence and other forms of violence are more concentrated in the

neighborhoods that are poor, particularly in West and East Baltimore. This means that poverty is among the reasons why the rate of black on black crimes is high in the city. Kaylen and Pridemore (2013) elucidates that due to the high rate of segregation which most of the Black males have grown up in, long term unemployment, reduced employment opportunities, and failing schools, there are high chances that they develop deviant behavior. This means that contestation over space and material possessions are among the reasons for the high rates of crime among these youths. Also, in such communities, there are fewer chances to gain the material possessions without endangering own and other people's lives.

Another reason that has emerged in recent discussions is the reduction in police arrests, especially following the protests that accompanied Freddie Gray's death. Three weeks following Gray's death, the police made only 1,453 arrests, which was a reduction of over 40 percent from the arrests in 2013 and 2014 (Lemon, 2015). Without such arrests for violence, the blacks have been given room to acquire and use firearms. With the protests and the accompanying scrutiny on police use of violence, it is no wonder the police have been reluctant to engage with the blacks in addressing the crime (Altman, et al 2015). Incidentally, this happens in a community that is already prone to crime and whose youths have a violence tendency because of the underlying socio-economic reasons.

#### Age Groups Most Prone to Violence/Violent Behavior

According to Skogan (1990), the peak age of criminal behavior is normally between the ages of 16 and 25, explaining the reason why most of the perpetrators of black on black crimes are within this age bracket. Some of

the factors cited for this reality include the high possibility of the young person to belong to a subculture, and some of these subcultures engaging in criminal and violent behavior. Also, within the black communities, the youth have limited opportunities to legitimately acquire desired material possessions. Also, such young people tend to have very few responsibilities allowing them time to engage in other adventures, some that lead to crime. Rebellion at this age can often lead to conflict with the law, also given the fact that boys at this age seek to ‘prove’ their masculinity. Some of the young people are expected to age out of crime and others, with effective interventions, can reform and become productive members of their communities (Kaylen & Pridemore, 2013).

#### Preventive Measures in Black on Black Crime

Programs and measures targeted at preventing black on black crime will lead to major social and economic benefits through reduction of crime-related costs incurred by individuals, communities, as well as the entire the criminal justice system. Also, given the reality of the young people perpetrating these crimes and their root causes, prevention of black on black crime in the community will be effective if the efforts are targeted towards the groups that are more prone to crime, and on the socio-economic causes of the crime. The beginning place in preventing the problem is developing the understanding that it is a major problem that needs to be solved (Altman, et al 2015).

Among the ways of preventing it is strengthening social ties among youth in the affected communities. It is necessary that the youth are empowered to engage more in socio-economic activities within their communities, such as

through employment. It would help to engage more black youth in the law enforcement. Prevention of crime is possible where African-American boys and men are provided the chance to achieve their total potential (Altman, et al 2015). Engaging them in socio-economic activities of the community will ensure that they do not have the time to engage in other deviant activities. It is necessary that the community creates recreation and employment opportunities, targeted to the African American youths as a way of preventing their engagement in crime.

Another way of preventing black on black crime is to energize the black youth to take up more responsibilities in their community and for their personal safety. The problem can only be solved by those who are affected, but they have to be equipped with the necessary resources to be active in their community, and thus, avoid crime. When the youth are provided with the necessary legitimate means to acquire material possessions and to remain active, there is a high possibility that they will not need to use illegitimate means and will not have the time to engage in criminal activities (Kaylen & Pridemore, 2013). Another effective approach would be involving the youth in ensuring security in their neighborhoods, in such actions as neighborhood watch. Given that they are part of the problem, they can also be part of the solution, thus preventing the chances of crime in the neighborhoods.

#### Re-Educating the Community to Prevent Black on Black Crime

It is time for the policy makers, law enforcement and the community to work together to find out what will work and discuss new approaches and ideas in fighting the crime. This is because collaborative efforts are the most



effective way of finding answers and solutions to the problem affecting the community. Working together will require re-educating the community on the dangers of the crime and what could be done to prevent and the problem. Sanburn (2015) posits that it is necessary to empower the blacks to deal with their own problems, beginning with promoting a change of attitude towards law enforcement and being prepared to work with the agencies for the sake of the community. This cannot work without creating the necessary awareness among the members of community on the dangers of crime and the need to work with law enforcement to achieve security and individual safety.

Thus, as Von Drehle, et al (2015) argues, there should be concerted efforts to educate and re-educate the youth in Baltimore City to help in preventing the black on black crimes. The efforts to educate the community should take place in various avenues including churches, schools and other community organizations, enlisting more black youth to play various roles including those of volunteers, mentors, tutors and job training coaches. Re-education should also be carried out using various channels including social media, radio, TV, faith community and neighborhood leaders to promote crime prevention. While targeting all the youth in the community, such efforts should also be targeted towards those who are more prone to crime, analyzing risk factors, and those who have already been in contact with the criminal justice system.

Policy makers should come up and implement community education activities that are targeted towards prevention of black on black crimes. Such would include conferences and workshops targeted towards different

youth groups. Most important is the need to identify, rehabilitate and educate those who are at greater risk, such as the youth who have been in contact with the criminal justice system and those who are identified as having problem behavior. The entire community should receive awareness on the ways to be their “ brother’s keeper” to rid their community of crime. Such education will go a long way in allowing the entire community to take responsibility for crime control and prevention (Von Drehle, et al 2015).

#### The Role of Individuals in Preventing Black on Black Crimes

Involving the members of the community in fighting the crime will go a long way in addressing the problem. Some of the measures that can work effectively include recruiting more young people from the community in law enforcement. Another way this can happen is in engaging the community in problem-oriented policing, including getting information from the affected communities and listening to the members of the community. After all, they hold important information as they know their communities better.

Community policing and targeted patrol will ensure that the police are engaging the community in preventing the crime (Sanburn, 2015). After all, the members of the community are part of the problem and should work with policy makers in forging a solution.

Sanburn (2015) suggests implementation of different models of neighborhood watch as an effective and politically viable answer to the problem of black on black crime. Such efforts are suggested to be effective in outshining the present responses of theatrical rallies and marches, such as the cases following shooting by police and deaths in police custody. Although there are mixed conclusions in research on the effectiveness of these

approaches, the idea remains that engaging the community in ensuring security will be much more effective than any other approach in addressing black on black crimes. This will also depend on the effectiveness in the implementation and administration of such programs. Generally, when effectively implemented and administered, neighborhood watch programs achieve considerable results in terms of crime prevention.

### Conclusion

The problem of black on black crime is a really serious one in Baltimore City, necessitating policy makers to come up with effective solutions, and fast. The solution lies in helping the young blacks to engage in activities that promote their full potential and thus, reduce their chances to engage in crime. Implementation of a prevention program should assume the idea of “My Brother's Keeper” initiative proposed by President Barack Obama. This is the idea of helping the youth in the community to achieve their full potential. The leadership in the city should engage in providing education and the necessary resources to engage the youth and ensure minimal chances to engage in crime. Education and empowerment programs should be implemented and targeted towards the unique needs of the community, and more importantly, the young people should be engaged in preventing the crime. They understand their communities better and will be a critical resource in solving the problem.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: A Dangerous Neighborhood in Baltimore City.