

TAKING THE STAND AGAINST VIOLENCE



Urban League of
Nebraska



U-YES

URBAN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SERIES



Urban League of
Nebraska

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STAGGERING STATISTICS

“Currently Nebraska has the third-highest black homicide rate in the nation. In Omaha gangs, guns, and black on black youth violence are at the center of black homicide issues. Nebraska’s 82,000 black residents make up 4.5 percent of the state’s population. Blacks have accounted for 40 percent of Omaha’s homicide victims over the last three years. More than half of last year’s victims were between ages 16 and 24. At this age our youth are more influenced by gang activity. To date, the Omaha Police Department has been able to identify 3,038 suspected gang members, last year it was just 300.” (Per Omaha World Herald Article)

Guns were the weapon of choice in 9 out of 10 slayings of black residents in Nebraska over the last three years. In the vast majority of these slayings, the shooter was black. More community organizations are trying to cease the violence by expanding street invention programs to reach out to gang members, provide more mentors and activities, and establishing new training and employment programs. Nebraska’s rate of 34 homicides per 100,000 blacks in 2007 was 65 percent above the national rate. (Per Omaha World Herald Article)

The high poverty and drop-out rates in Omaha are said to be two of the biggest reasons that violence has become a big issue in metro area. According to the U.S. Census survey, Omaha has the 11th highest poverty rate among blacks in one the nation’s 100 largest metro areas. Three national studies listed Nebraska as one of the state s with the highest dropout rate among blacks, the rate being more than 50 percent.

These are disturbing numbers but as a community we need to step up and protect our youth and families by standing together and fighting to help take back our community.

“Without struggle, there is no progress.” (Frederick Douglass)

BEING THE CHANGE NEEDED

As we close the books on another Black History Month, we must ask ourselves, "What are we, members of the proverbial 'village,' doing to uplift young black males to live up to their full potential and pioneer new advancements that will one day become additional Black history?"

Will we rise to meet the standards of high achievement set by so many of our ancestors, or will we continue to shame the legacy of those who paved the way that we can live in the freedom we currently enjoy? By now, we've all read or heard about the February 21, 2010 Omaha World-Herald article citing the grim statistical findings that Omaha is one of the deadliest cities in the country for Black males. With the additional issues of poverty, record joblessness, school drop out rates, unwed and teenage births, drug abuse, undiagnosed mental illness, criminal law violations and truancy plaguing families and youth in the North Omaha area, the attraction to gangs and illegal activity is at an all-time high. This is a very scary time for our community and the immediate future looks extremely bleak. With this much violence this early in the year, I am certain that you have worried the same thoughts as me: "It's going to be a 'hot' summer if we don't get a handle on all of this black-on-black youth violence."

It is imperative that we begin making the positive cultivation of a family environment; and specifically quality time with our children, our number one priority. It is with great sadness that I tell you that the reality is we have semi-literate, angry, self-hateful, disenfranchised and emotionally-detached young people who are craving structure, education and a caring hand. Instead, they are being met with broken, empty homes, sub-poverty level household incomes, and the lures of gang affiliation. But even among the most problematic of our youth, there are boys and girls who want a better life and simply need someone to take the time to assist them in making the right decisions.

There are several youth organizations operating within the North Omaha community, and many in partnership with the Urban League of Nebraska, that could use your time, treasure and talents in working with our young people. While you reach out to your own child and attempt to save them from gang involvement and a life of certain destruction and untimely death, please reach out to other children in our community who could also benefit from your guidance and interaction. Mentoring a young person has invaluable consequences. The rampant violence and self-destruction in our community affects everyone. If the least of us are having issues, we must all dig deep and commit to the improvement of our lives. We have to instill an understanding in our children that murder, gangs, drugs and a lack of education will not solve anything; and that disagreements can be settled without lawlessness. Actions now can have grave consequences later. The violence is affecting us all, and we all must assist with the effort to end the tragedy and restore our families and Community.

By Shawntal M. Smith,

The logo features the words "STAND UP" in large, bold, black capital letters. A red silhouette of a person with arms raised is positioned behind the letters "A" and "N". Below "STAND UP" is a red horizontal bar containing the words "SPEAK OUT" in white, bold, capital letters.

STAND UP SPEAK OUT

With all of the current technology that is among us today, youth have a great deal of communication outlets at their disposal. With the explosion of social networking sites such as Myspace, Facebook, Twitter, and numerous others, youth have been able to keep in touch with and meet new people all the time. With Facebook being arguably the most popular site amongst them all, the Urban Youth Empowerment Series (U-YES) Program decided to create a group page where youth in the program could visit. This group page has been geared towards youth discussions on the topics of Gang Violence, Drug Usage, Teenage Pregnancy, and Community Service. Youth can also engage in "Open Wall" discussions. With the growing numbers of members, this group will surely have an influence on our youth and their perspective on real life issues.

If you have any questions in regards to the Urban Youth Empowerment Series (U-YES) Program or the U-YES Facebook page, please visit the following website or contact the following U-YES Specialist:

U-YES FACEBOOK GROUP LINK:

http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?v=box_3&ref=profile&id=63203258#!/group.php?gid=143419280640&ref=mf

RICKY SMITH.....U-YES COORDINATOR - 402-201-8618

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It is tragic today in our community how there is “NO” solution to the violence that is going on. As members of our community, we try to find answers each day of how we can go about coming together to get this problem solved. Prevention strategies are discussed but sometimes action is not being taken from the community as whole. Many people in our community want their voices to be heard and have many ideas that everyone in the city can benefit from. Going forward we need to come up with a plan that can help stop the violence in our community. Comments from the parents and even our youth can help out with the problems that keep our community at risk.

Parent Comments:

Please Facebook your comments or drop them off at the Urban League

What type of actions are you as a parent taking to help prevent teen violence?

2. If there were non-violent group meetings to help plan/organize ways to prevent violence, would you be willing to attend?
3. If there were non-violent events to keep youth/teens off the street, would you be willing to help volunteer?
4. How can parents be more active in their respective neighborhoods? (ex.- keep lights on at night)
5. Do you feel the need for teen curfews? If so, what age and time should they have to be in?

Youth comments:

1. How can you as a youth help stop the violence in your era?
2. Does the violence that is going on have an effect on you? Why?
3. If there were non-violent events for youth, would you attend to help keep youth/teens off the streets?
4. Do you think it is time for teen curfews? Why?

If there were teen talks about violence to get your input, would you participate?

By. Tyrone Marshall

VIOLENCE



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Never settle for being successful, when you're destined to be great....