
MARYLAND STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
LEADERSHIP ACADEMY
CLASS OF 2007

Report on the



Hosted
May 12, 2007

University of Maryland School of Law
Baltimore, Maryland

INTRODUCTION

Violence in our communities constitutes a critical issue to the health and welfare of youth, both nationally as well as in Maryland. Increasing amounts of public attention have been focused on the issue of youth violence. In addition, the Maryland General Assembly has authorized the creation of a taskforce on school safety to explore youth violence issues.¹ The Fellows decided to utilize the platform of the public service project of the Leadership Academy of the Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) to foster dialogue among youth and adult leaders through a Summit in order to formulate potential solutions to this range of public policy concerns.

Because involving constituencies directly impacted by policy decisions can result in the best approaches and solutions to problems, the Fellows convened the Summit on Youth Violence as a means of increasing the involvement of Maryland youth in dialogue about and development of solutions to violence prevention and intervention. The Summit was hosted at the University of Maryland School of Law on May 12, 2007. Student delegates between the ages of 15-18 from high schools around Maryland had the opportunity to develop and exercise their leadership skills while at the same time having a facilitated format in which to furnish their recommendations on youth violence prevention and intervention to community leaders, elected or appointed officials and policy makers. The hope of the Summit was two-fold: first, positive community-based and student-focused action would be generated from the Summit in a meaningful way that assures the predominant number of Maryland's youth will be able to avoid violence or prevent it before its onset, and, second, the recommendations elicited from the delegates will constitute a valuable source of information to all who are concerned about the health and welfare of the leaders of tomorrow.

HISTORY AND PURPOSE OF THE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The Leadership Academy is a special committee of the MSBA. Each year, the Leadership Academy sponsors a class of Fellows to participate in a 12 month venture designed to provide leadership developmental experience. The goal is to foster collaborative relationships between members of the bar, government and the public to promote professionalism, access to justice, public service and respect for the rule of law. The Fellows, utilizing the skills they acquire, are expected to develop and implement a public service project that will enrich the community.

SELECTION PROCESS FOR STUDENT DELEGATES

When one views media via the television, or hears a report via the radio, or even reads an article that has been published in the newspaper, one may fret for the future of Maryland's youth. After having hosted the Summit, however, the Fellows can genuinely state hope exists as myriad talented and eloquently spoken students representing schools from around Maryland actively participated in and formulated innovative approaches to the issue of youth violence. At the one-day Summit, approximately 40 students representing 13 counties across the State of Maryland convened to serve as delegates. Being composed of a cross-section of Maryland's high schools,

¹Maryland Manual On-line, Taskforce on School Safety, <http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/mdmanual/26excom/html/32schsafe.html> (Visited May 10, 2007).

the Fellows were pleased with the mixture of delegates who attended the Summit. The Fellows utilized 3 selection criteria when engaging in proactive dialogue and outreach with high schools in order to acquire delegates, which included:

- The student must be a leader and active member of his or her high school.
- The student must possess interest in violence related issues.
- The student must be willing to actively engage with other student and adult leaders at the Summit.

HONORED GUESTS AND FACILITATORS

Recognizing the need to have speakers who could encourage and inspire the uninhibited exchange of ideas on the topics of gang violence, dating violence, and access to guns, the Summit on Youth Violence was honored to have the following guests to share words of wisdom:

The Honorable Katie Curran O'Malley, First Lady of Maryland

Katie O'Malley, First Lady of Maryland, has a long history of public service. In 1988, Judge Catherine Curran O'Malley (Katie) began her career in law as a clerk in the Baltimore County State's Attorney's Office. After graduating from law school and passing the bar exam, she was promoted to Assistant State's Attorney for Baltimore County, where she served for 10 years.

Before being appointed to her current position as an Associate Judge of the District Court of Baltimore City, Judge O'Malley served on many boards and committees. She served on the Executive Committee of the Women's Bar, the House of Ruth, The Caroline Center, the Baltimore Zoo, and on the board of Notre Dame Prep. She is currently a member of the Baltimore City Bar Association.

Judge O'Malley is married to the Governor of the State of Maryland, Martin O'Malley, and they have four children.

David C. Miller, M.Ed.

David C. Miller, M.Ed. is the co-founder and Chief Visionary Officer of the Urban Leadership Institute, LLC, (www.urbanyouth.org) a social enterprise that focuses on developing positive youth development strategies. ULI provides strategic planning, professional development, positive youth development concepts and crisis management services.

Further, Miller is the architect of the Dare to Be King Project, a community based intervention that addresses anger and decision making among African American males ages 12-17. He is also the author of several books.

Miller is a graduate of the University of Baltimore (B.S., Political Science) and Goucher College (Master's Degree in Education).

Luis Cardona

Luis Cardona is currently the Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator for Montgomery County, Maryland, with the Department of Health and Human Services. He formerly was an adjunct professor at the Institute for Public Safety and Justice at the University of the District of Columbia. Cardona received his Bachelor's in Political Science from Howard University and is currently working on his Master's Degree. He is on the National Advisory Board of Barrios Unidos, which is a nationally and internationally recognized organization that works with gang involved youth, as well as the National Advisory Board of the National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute.

Cardona has been instrumental in establishing several gang truces around the country with an emphasis on the DC metropolitan area. He is the father of two wonderful children, and a father figure to over 100 young men and women throughout the nation. Cardona is a former gang member and ex-offender who turned his life around after being shot five times and losing many of his best friends to gang life.

Toby Treem Guerin, Esquire

Toby Treem Guerin, Esquire, is a 2002 graduate of the University of Maryland School of Law. She currently serves as the Deputy Director for the Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Maryland School of Law (www.cdsum.org) where she is responsible for program development, training, and mediation coordination. Through C-DRUM, Guerin also works with schools to develop and implement comprehensive conflict resolution programs including peer mediation, teacher training, and curriculum infusion. In addition, she has sat on the boards of Anne Arundel Conflict Resolution Program and Maryland Council for Dispute Resolution.

Edward E. Cornwell, III, MD

Edward E. Cornwell III, M.D., was born and raised in Washington D.C. He attended Brown University and received his medical degree from Howard University. As the Chief of Adult Trauma at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, Dr. Cornwell's career interest is in the prevention and treatment of traumatic injuries, and their critical care sequelae.

Dr. Cornwell has received numerous awards and citations for his efforts in education, outreach, and violence prevention. He has received major teaching awards in every faculty position he has held, and was selected as the commencement speaker at the USC School of Medicine in 1996 and at the Howard University School of Medicine in 2002.

Dr. Cornwell's present interests are focused on the multidisciplinary approach to violence prevention among at-risk youth and trauma systems development as it relates to pre-hospital care.

THE PROBLEM

According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), although high-profile school shootings have increased public concern for student safety, school associated violent deaths account for less than 1% of homicides among school aged youth.² “In 2004, more than 780,000 young people ages 10 to 24 were treated in emergency departments for injuries sustained due to violence.”³ The following sober statistics were derived in a 2005 nationwide survey of high school students:

- 35.9% reported being in a physical fight one or more times in the 12 months preceding the survey.
- 18.5% reported carrying a weapon (e.g., gun, knife, or club) on one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey.⁴

Furthermore, a 2001 study estimated that 30% of 6th to 10th graders in the United States were involved in bullying as a bully, a target of bullying, or both.⁵

As a judge, First Lady of Maryland, and mother, the Honorable Katie O’Malley has a keen insight into the prevalence of youth violence in today’s society. As the first speaker of the day, she emphasized the scope of the problem of juvenile violence, thereby framing the debate for the rest of the day, and introducing the students to the real consequences of juvenile violence to society. Some areas for considerable attention are:

- Children crave structure in their lives, and when family, school, and community do not offer support, they will find it in other ways, such as gangs. In the U.S. alone, there are over 840,000 active gang members. Youth across the State are seeking to fill emotional voids and create social bonds by becoming involved with gangs. Unfortunately, instead of reinforcing positive ideas, gangs tend to strengthen the worst parts of a person’s character and violence is often a result.
- A critical issue that more often than not is a direct correlation to violence is truancy, or absence from school. Studies reflect that truancy is a key factor in whether or not a child will do drugs, commit crimes, become socially isolated, or fall behind in his or her education. Thus, Maryland’s juvenile justice system is exploring ways to tackle this problem.
- It is imperative that community structures be developed that support children and give them a healthy outlet for expressing their feelings.

² Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, *Youth Violence Facts At a Glance, Winter 2007*, http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/YV_DataSheet.pdf (Visited May 9, 2007).

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

Gang Violence

The reality is that youth who do not receive the support they need at home will often seek it from others. As such, many fall prey to gang life by virtue of needing a trusting support network. Irrespective of being termed a crew, clique, or posse, whether in urban or suburban America, violence is perpetrated through gangs. The Surgeon General reports that an estimated 26,000 gangs and 840,500 gang members were active in the U.S. in 1999.⁶ In addition, “[g]angs are present not only in inner-city schools, but in many suburban and rural schools as well. Between 1989 and 1995, the proportion of students reporting gangs at their school increased from 15 percent to 28 percent.”⁷

The reality is that violence is not a “black” or “white” issue, but a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-socio economic issue. For example, according to the 2004 National Youth Gang Survey, while Caucasians accounted for 7% of gang members in larger cities areas, they constitute 12% of gang membership in suburban counties, smaller cities and rural counties.⁸ While Hispanics/Latinos constituted between 46% to 56% of gang membership in larger cities, suburban counties and smaller cities, they only made up 30% of gang membership in rural areas. The consequences of gang membership and its influences on violence are disturbing. Pertinently, delinquency rates, including drug use, commission of violent offenses, and arrest rates, were higher for gang members, and the possession of fire arms and the number of fire arm related offenses and injuries are exponentially linked to such membership.⁹

Gangs are not only attributed to poverty and race, but transcend across economic lines. Thus, they can also be found in affluent communities. The issue of gang membership and gang related offenses constitutes a public health issue that must be addressed.

Dating Violence

Another type of violence that deserves serious consideration is that of dating violence. Oftentimes, the situations are overlooked, as young people typically choose to hide them. Some believe that this is primarily due to the inexperience of youth as well as the belief in the romanticism of relationships. Because many young ladies in particular are seeking independence from parents, they choose not to share harmful experiences for fear that the parents will worry and endeavor to prevent them from spending time with the perpetrator.

According to the Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 1 in 3 teens have experienced dating violence.¹⁰ Unfortunately, the violence can take many forms including physical violence, coercion, threats, intimidation, isolation, and emotional, sexual or economic

⁶ Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, *Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General, Chapter Two, The Prevalence of Youth Violence*, <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/chapter2/sec12.html#gangs> (Visited June 21, 2007).

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ National Youth Gang Center, *National Youth Gang Survey Analysis*, <http://www.iir.com/nygc/nygsa/> (Visited June 21, 2007).

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence, *Dating Violence*, <http://www.acadv.org/dating.html> (Visited June 21, 2007).

abuse.¹¹ Some of the issues and problems identified by the delegates that impact dating and relationship violence include:

Causes

Family and Environmental influences
Lack of self confidence
Rumors/Gossip

Consequences

Depression
Pregnancy
Jail/Death

Access to Guns/Pop Culture

Does anyone know the true impact of the myriad images of violence portrayed and/or reported in the newspapers, in the magazines and on the television? Not exactly, but according to the Center for Media and Public Affairs, violence without context is the type most likely to lead to imitative behavior in the audience.¹² The fact that violence is glorified and shown without emotional or physical consequences is what has Dr. Eddie Cornwell, III up in arms.

As the Chief of Trauma Surgery for Johns Hopkins Hospital, Dr. Cornwell has a unique perspective that is not afforded to the masses. He is charged with saving the lives of both perpetrators and victims of violence. Fed up with the violence, Dr. Cornwell has started his own crusade against it. He has invested in creating an eight minute video illustrating the effects of guns and violence.

An enlightening essay concerning the influence of mass media and communications on violence stated, "...from the research and public interest ...the sources of violence are complex and tied to our most basic nature as well as the social world we have created and that the media's particular relationship to social violence is extremely complicated"¹³ Although not the only cause, in the words of the essay, media is "...tied into the other violence-generating engines, and youth pay particular attention to them."¹⁴ Finally, the essay concludes in a manner that aptly describes the influence of mass media and communications on violence. "The role that the media play[s]...versus their potential role in deglorifying violence...showing our youth that armed aggression is not an American cultural right, will determine the media's ultimate relationship to...violence...."¹⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE THREE TRACKS

The substantive dialogue of the Summit occurred by and through facilitated break-out sessions that concerned violence as it relates to gangs, dating and popular culture's influence. During the morning, the students, having been pre-selected, participated in concurrent break-out

¹¹ Vanderbilt University, ProjectSafe, *Dating Violence*, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/ProjectSafe/dating.html> (Visited June 21, 2007).

¹² Center for Media and Public Affairs, *Violence in Popular Culture*, <http://www.cmpa.com/entertainmentStudies/Violence.htm> (Visited June 21, 2007).

¹³ Ray Currence, *Youth Violence and the Media: media, Violence, Youth and Society*, *The World & I*, Vol. 9, P. 3770 (July 1994).

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

sessions on each of the three tracks. During the afternoon, the students remained in their groups that were segregated at the morning plenary session and generated and formulated policy solutions and determined an agreed upon spokesperson to represent them at the town hall forum.

Track 1: Gang Violence
Facilitator: Luis Cardona

Gangs constitute an increasing issue in our schools and communities. The Fellows, as along with the other adult leaders who attended the town hall forum, truly learned how self-motivation coupled with positive mentors and other experiences can assure that young people can remain on the correct path to providing positive, substantive contributions to society. One of the spokespersons of this track provided an eloquent and inspirational testimony of how she shifted from her family, which was imbedded with the gang lifestyle, and from a record of suspensions and even expulsion, to achieving academic excellence and leadership at her high school.

The highlights from the discussion include the following:

- There is a lot of confusion on the definition of gangs. Some adults are unaware that a child is in a gang until someone either gets hurt or dies.
- Youth expect adults to take control. Thus, adults need to pay attention and recognize that there is a problem and take charge of the situation. Students would like school administrators (i.e. principals) to get more involved with them, in a positive way. Teachers should endeavor to relate and get to know students as well as be up front with them.
- Sometimes moving to a particular neighborhood will automatically result in you being a part of that gang.
- Many youth who are in gangs are just scared kids who oftentimes can not just walk away. Remember, it is hard to get out of gangs because gang members will kill them. Thus, in dealing with kids in gangs, patience and empathy are required.
- Mental health issues arise often when working with gang members. Hence, adults need to be proactive to assure students who have mental health problems receive the help they need.
- Police officers should adopt a neighborhood. Bring back Officer Friendly programs to dispel the youth's perception of officers.
- Communication is the key to ending gang violence. Do not ignore the problem. Local delegates need to interact with the schools and become more involved.
- Students need to engage their parents and talk about issues surrounding violence.

- Students need to be visible role models. Leadership councils should be implemented in the schools along with teen courts.
- Elected officials need to become proactively involved with the community and get to know their constituencies.
- Be an encouragement to young people. Compliment the students and let them know they are doing a good job. Just saying “hi” can break down barriers.
- Create mandatory support groups.
- Establish suggestion boxes at schools.
- Create peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities in school.
- Adequately fund after school activities at school that mirror the interests of the students. When designing after school activities, inquire with the kids what they are interested in. “If you build it, they will come.” “If you do not fund the kids, you are not funding the future.”
- If you can just change 1 life that is 1 less student who will potentially be in jail.
- You are successful. We look up to you. Visit and converse with the students. Be open-minded. Everyone is unique. Accept people for who they are.
- In Kent County, the youth do not have anything productive to do after school. The nearest mall is an hour away in Dover.
- Listen to your constituency. Create a task force that includes young people. Tap into student government groups to serve.
- Hire the young people over the summer to develop ideas. Then have more experienced people to collaborate with to further shape and create the benchmark and come up with more realistic outcomes.

Track 2: Dating/Relationship Violence
Facilitator: Toby Treem Guerin, Esquire

This track emphasized the need to “talk about” violence – as silence is not helpful. The students engaged in a warm up exercise called “The Wind Blows”. The facilitator utilized the exercise as a means to indicate that none of the teenagers present would admit to or ask who has been involved in teen dating violence because it is considered a personal subject and taboo for public discussion. As a result, the following ground rules evolved: (1) keep an open mind, (2) anything said in the room would remain confidential, and (3) respectfully listen to others. Some suggested ways to bring about change are:

- The youth noted that although they do not currently have the financial resources or voting power to make a difference, it is only a matter of time before they will.
- Use the public announcement system to conduct Public Service Announcements about dating and relationship violence. In the words of the delegates, students are motivated by the opportunity to avoid attending class. Assemblies are one way to motivate students to listen to presentations. Activities conducted at such assemblies, while containing potentially an element of fun or amusement could be utilized to provide valuable information about relationship violence.
- Adults must be involved! Be involved in the community. Let youth know you are supportive.
- Foster a greater level of self respect and establish programs in schools to address self confidence issues at an early age. Create programs at the elementary school level that involve both the parent and child. Programs must be consistent and reinforce fundamental values, such as self-respect and the resiliency to progress forward positively despite the repercussions of any negative choices.
- Become involved in the community. Teach the warning signs and how to get help.
- Make existing programs more accessible. Better market what is currently available.
- Students, as among peers, must “step up to the plate,” and proactively provide information about and serve as counselors for relationship violence.
- Develop strong role models, both female and male.
- Learn from mistakes.
- Establish supportive friends.
- Make better choices and seize opportunities.
- Take a stand, as one small voice leads to many loud voices.
- Embrace the community at-large and the various cultures within.
- It is never too late...they suggested to just get the programs started as you need not wait until next year.

Track 3: Violence in Popular Culture – Changing the Culture through Technology-Based Solutions

Facilitator: David C. Miller, M.Ed.

This lively discussion reflected a concern on how popular culture, through television, radio and publications, influences the interest in and desire of youth to possess guns. The youth assert that students need to be involved in preventing violence, but in a way that attracts their attention. Thus, administrators should aim to educate through entertainment. Using popular teachers to create new programs will by virtue of association make the programs popular.

This dynamic track believed that the best way to broach these issues with the “iPod generation” is through technology. The student delegates to this track decided to plan the creation of and hope to progress forward with the incorporation of a web-based non-profit named Youth Violence Prevention. The non-profit will host a website whose mission will consist of facilitating positive mentorship experiences between students, youth peers, and adults through dialogue via message boards and list services.

In furtherance of this initiative, the delegates made the following recommendations:

- Create interesting topics that youth will find engaging.
- Develop class assignments around real issues that are important to the youth. “Kids want to hear from kids.”
- Student-run conference call.
- Use Facebook as the social engine to reduce the glamorization of violence.
- Establish www.mdoyouthviolence.org as a web portal to highlight tips, solutions, and activities for youth by youth to address school and community violence across the State.
- Link the portal to MySpace and Facebook.
- Develop a youth on youth mentoring program.

Conclusion – Contemplations on Prospective Outcomes

When reflecting on the dialogue that took place between students and community leaders, elected or appointed officials and policy-makers, the Fellows conclude that the recommendations so eloquently provided by the students must not remain as the outcome of an intellectual exercise. When 1 youth sustains injury, or grievous wounds, or even dies due to violence, the community as a whole is deprived. This notion was poignantly presented by Dr. Cornwell, the highlights of which are:

- There has to be a call to action through a public relations campaign that both deglorifies and changes American culture toward the acceptance of and access to violence.

- Access to guns plays a major role in the escalating level of violence experienced by youth.
- The purpose of gun control is not an attempt to relinquish rights but rather is a means of preventing a serious public health crisis.

To that end, Dr. Cornwell created a PSA to draw distinction between hype and reality. As he phrased it, “we’ve created a culture where kids think violence is cool, and we’ve got to change it”. Thus, it is imperative that the recommendations of the students are implemented in a coordinated, comprehensive, multi-disciplinary and multi-modal method as to change not only individual aspects of violence, or random acts, but rather, the culture of violence as a whole. Hence, the Fellows urge that the recommendations provided through the Summit be implemented through legislative action, policy development and involvement of the media and channels of popular culture. This, obviously, can only be successfully achieved if the funding level is commensurate to the level of resources required to address this issue.

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