



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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T. Rashad Byrdsong to speak at a public hearing on Violence with Amanda Green, Member, Allegheny County Council and Joan Cleary, Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee, to discuss Community Empowerment Association's report on violence as a public health issue, Tuesday, June 30, 2009 from 5pm – 6pm at the Courthouse, Room 119, 436 Grant Street (Downtown Pittsburgh).

In response to the escalating violence in our communities, and the City of Pittsburgh's plan, Pittsburgh Initiative for Reducing Crime (PIRC), to curb violence using a criminal justice approach, Community Empowerment Association, Inc., through its founder, T. Rashad Byrdsong, issued a call to action, convened three emergency forums where over 350 residents and community stakeholders attended, and from those forums published a document entitled, "***A Public Health Approach to Violence Reduction for the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County,***" in December 2008. Contained within the document is collaborative approach to violence reduction and prevention that not only addresses the root causes, but also demonstrates a plan of action that will provide sustainable solutions. This plan has been released to public and University of Pittsburgh officials, school superintendents, the African American Leadership within this region, local and national foundations, and the media.

The public hearing on Tuesday, June 30, 2009, is an opportunity for all who are interested in participating in this continued call to action to address violence in our communities. Mr. Byrdsong will specifically be talking about what our Government and Health Institutions can do, and will have copies of the booklet on hand for those in attendance.

There is HOPE: To break the cycle of violence, service providers, academicians, and public officials must leave their silos, share information, resources, and develop an interdisciplinary and scientifically sound strategic plan. The most viable solution is to collaboratively address violence based on a public health paradigm—an intervention system focused on prevention, rehabilitation, and development. This strategy will engage and empower community residents to take ownership, and sustain much needed resident commitment for long-term public safety.

Violence (a preventable circumstance), is a symptom of a larger social and economical set of conditions. Contrary to some opinions - murder and social isolation do not come naturally to or are inherent in one group of people. Black, Brown or otherwise, violent behavior is perpetuated by environmental conditions and social circumstances that people find themselves in. Filled with disparities in education, and lack of economic opportunities, paired with substance abuse and underemployment, violence springs from the hopelessness of people that have been

marginalized, dehumanized, and prevented from the rights of full citizenship. Many of them are distressed with the fear that things will definitely get worse-- not better.

To stop the violence, government in particular and the community at large have to be committed and dedicated to creating enforceable policies that will guarantee quality of life, education, living wages, gun control, and economic stability with economic opportunities, thereby working towards the elimination of poverty. But we cannot stop there! All of us (faith-based and community based organizations, universities, schools, health institutions, community residents, political leaders, parents and youth) must take responsibility and work together towards ending youth violence. Our communities can no longer afford not to address the loss of our most precious asset – our future – which is through our children.

JOIN US ON TUESDAY, JUNE 30, 2009 IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 436 GRANT STREET (DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH) COURTHOUSE ROOM 119!

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR ENDING THE VIOLENCE THAT PLAGUES OUR COMMUNITIES!!

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO ENDING VIOLENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES!!!

Veteran community activist, T. Rashad Byrdsong founded CEA in 1994 to address the impact of violence on families and communities. For more information about the hearing, call 412-371-3689 or email us at ComEmpAsoc@aol.com.