

# **Blueprint for a Safe Milwaukee**

**A Report of the 2015 Unite Milwaukee Summit**



**State Senator Nikiya Harris Dodd**

**May 2015**



# Nikiya Q. Harris Dodd

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR  
6TH SENATE DISTRICT



Dear Neighbor,

As another summer approaches our Milwaukee community, I believe that it is up to each of us to stand united in our commitment to preventing violence in our neighborhoods. Neighbors play a vital role in the fight against violence. On March 14, 2015, I held Unite Milwaukee, an anti-violence summit aimed at empowering neighbors to connect with the resources and tools they need to help reduce violence in their neighborhoods.

This summit was a critical turning point in Milwaukee's future, as it brought together everyday neighbors from across Milwaukee to brainstorm steps to prevent violence right on their block. Together, they formed a vision- a future for Milwaukee that is brighter, safer, and stronger than ever before.

Together on March 14<sup>th</sup>, the community drafted a blueprint for a safe Milwaukee, and I am proud to be the messenger of their hard work. I have generated this report from their vision because I believe that the key to violence begins on every block and starts with every neighbor.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report and for taking a stand against violence in our community.

Sincerely,

Senator Nikiya Harris Dodd  
6<sup>th</sup> Senate District

# Special Acknowledgements

This report and the 2015 Unite Milwaukee Summit would not have been possible without the dedication and contributions of the following individuals and organizations:

- Gloria Stearns and Israel Mendez of the 30<sup>th</sup> Street Industrial Corridor Corporation
- Sharlen and Reggie Moore, Center for Youth Engagement and Urban Underground
- The dedicated volunteers from Running Rebels
- Lorrie Pardo and the amazing individuals at the Washington Park Senior Center
- Beth Sahagian-Allsopp, photographer and owner of Vanguard Sculpture Services, LTD

## Our Planning Committee Members

- Izmira Aitch, Congresswoman Gwen Moore's Office
- Elizabeth Banks, Safe and Sound
- Anthony Caples, Medical College of Wisconsin
- Jewell Carter, Urban De'version
- Anneliese Dickman, Moms Demand Action
- Paul Geenen, Organizing for America
- Ashanti Hamilton, City of Milwaukee Alderman
- Richard Harris, Vision Beyond Bars
- Vi Hawkins, Community Activist
- Captain Jutiki Jackson, Milwaukee Police Department
- Cavalier Johnson, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett's Office
- Paul Kjelland, 371 Productions, Precious Lives Project
- Martha Love, Community Activist
- Talibah Mateen, Safe and Sound
- Everett Marshburn, Milwaukee Public Television
- Pastor Harold Moore, Mercy Memorial Baptist Church
- Eugene Nelson, Prison Action Milwaukee
- Danny Robb, Big Brothers, Big Sisters Milwaukee
- Dorinthia Robinson, Community Activist
- Jeff Roman, Community Advocates
- Heidi Rose, Wisconsin Anti-Violence Effort
- Denise Sanders, Community Activist
- Bianca Shaw, Department of Workforce Development
- Cathy Simpson, Community Activist
- Jamaal Smith, Safe and Sound
- Adrian Spencer, Safe and Sound
- Bree Spencer, Safe and Sound
- Maritza Ugarte, Safe and Sound
- Marilyn Walczak, Justice Initiatives Institute
- Cecilia Williams-Young, Community Activist

## Our Generous Sponsors

- Gorman and Company
- 30<sup>th</sup> Street Industrial Corridor Corporation
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- Center for Youth Engagement
- Atonement Lutheran Church

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# Introduction

The year 2015 has been a very deadly one in the city of Milwaukee. With 54 homicides recorded to date, the homicide rate has more than tripled from this time last year. Milwaukee has been hard hit with high unemployment, crushing poverty, and broken communities for far too long.

This report has been created to provide a comprehensive look at the Unite Milwaukee Anti-Violence Summit hosted by State Senator Nikiya Harris Dodd and the 30<sup>th</sup> Street Industrial Corridor on March 14, 2015. The goal of the Unite Milwaukee Summit was to bring people together to make Milwaukee a safer place to work and to live. Getting people together to develop new relationships, ideas, and strategies helps foster efforts to reduce violence. In order to be successful, the 2015 Unite Milwaukee Summit focused on the following key parties: neighborhood members, youth and young adults, law enforcement, community outreach programs, and elected officials.

This report will cover the creation and planning of the summit, along with details about the participants, speakers, and community groups that were involved. This report will also focus on the blueprint that summit participants created to help community members address violence on their block. This blueprint includes detailed responses from attendees on possible ways that community members, elected officials and law enforcement can help to reduce violence and make Milwaukee neighborhoods a safer place to live.

## Creation of the Summit

In the heat of the violent summer of 2014, Senator Harris Dodd and over 60 concerned members of the Milwaukee community gathered together for a listening session on violence. The



listening session was in the wake of the tragic death of 10-year old Sierra Guyton, a young girl who was innocently playing on a playground when a stray bullet took her life. The community, shaken by a loss of one of their precious children, demanded action.

On July 7, 2015, concerned residents gathered together at the YMCA and brainstormed solutions to gun violence in their neighborhoods. For over an hour, community members discussed solutions, working in small and large groups. The resounding message from this debate was clear: the community wanted tangible solutions to violence, and they needed them before another deadly summer hit. The idea for the summit blossomed from these participants, who felt it was critical for every member of the

community to have a stake in preventing violence in their neighborhood. In September of 2014, the initial planning meeting began, with over 30 individuals working to create the summit. This included people from community organizations and individuals from local neighborhoods.

The planning team chose the speakers, picked the discussion topics, and organized for the event. The summit was scheduled for Saturday March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at Washington Park Senior Center in Milwaukee. It would be an all-day event including 12 guest speakers, 27 resource tables, interactive activities, a special music performance, and over 130 participants.



## Our Volunteers

Volunteers for the Unite Milwaukee Summit came from all corners of the city, from youth organizations to neighborhood associations, from ex-felons to elected officials to everyday neighbors. Together, they planned every aspect of the summit and made sure that the day was informative and productive. Instrumental in this planning was the summit's co-hosting organization, the 30<sup>th</sup> Street Industrial Corridor Corporation. The fiscal agent for the summit, the 30<sup>th</sup> Street Industrial Corridor Corporation brought in sponsorships and hands-on support to ensure that the summit was a success.



Israel Mendez (left) and Gloria Stearns (right) from the 30<sup>th</sup> Street Industrial Corridor Corporation talk with Richard Schwoegler (center) of BASICS about solutions to violence at the Unite Milwaukee Summit

# Unite Milwaukee 2015

Nearly 20 youth raised their hands on the morning of March 14, 2015, acknowledging that they had lost family members and loved ones to gun violence. Their grim faces showed the stark reality of Milwaukee's violence: the loss of childhood and innocence in the face of trauma and tragedy.

Minutes later, Muhibb Dyer and Kwabena Antoine Nixon pleaded with these youth on-stage. They begged them to not be drawn into a life of crime. They spoke to them in poetry and spoken word, asking them to take a stand against violence in their community and in their homes. They asked them to chant five simple words: "I will not die young."



“I will not die young.”

The youth had come, along with over 100 members of their community, for one simple reason: to brainstorm ways to reduce violence on their block and in their neighborhood. They came to listen attentively to speakers and to actively engage in discussions meant to lead them down a path to a safer Milwaukee.

The Unite Milwaukee Summit had begun, and every participant there knew that it was time to roll up their sleeves and commit to a day of hard work and discussion. After being greeted with opening remarks by State Senator Nikiya Harris Dodd and Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, the agenda for the day included guest speakers and panels with intermediate breaks for participants to look at resource tables and to network. At lunch, participants were asked to participate in a group discussion with



individuals around their table. With a facilitator at each table, participants began to form their blueprint for a safe Milwaukee.

## Resource Tables

Throughout the day-long summit, participants had the opportunity to engage with participating organizations that were tabling throughout the edges of the room. These organizations provided literature and knowledge on a variety of topics, including violence prevention, employment opportunities, healthcare options, and faith-based resources. The nearly 30 organizations that were tabling connected community members directly to volunteer opportunities and vital resources throughout the day. See Appendix A for a list of all participating organizations.



## Summit Speakers

The summit speakers were dedicated individuals from neighborhood associations, block watch councils, academia, business and law enforcement. Throughout the day, they challenged participants to think critically about tangible solutions to violence on their blocks. From building trust between the police and community to outlining the historical social factors that influence violence, the speakers inspired the audience to commit to action to prevent violence in their own neighborhoods. The dedicated speakers included the following individuals:

- John Rakowski, Medical College of Wisconsin Violence Prevention Initiative
- Dr. Robert Smith, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- Reverend Walter Lanier, Progressive Baptist Church, Milwaukee Area Technical College
- Captain Jutiki Jackson, Milwaukee Police Department 7<sup>th</sup> District
- Steve O'Connell, 7<sup>th</sup> District Block Watch Council,
- Captain Jason Smith, Milwaukee Police Department 3<sup>rd</sup> District
- Bently Turner, Lindsay Heights Public Safety Coordinator
- Joel Lee, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF)
- Joshua Johnson, former felon and community organizer
- Fred Royal, President of the Milwaukee Chapter of NAACP
- Gloria Stearns, 30<sup>th</sup> Street Industrial Corridor Corporation
- Greg Williams, Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board

## Working Lunch Concepts and Questions

During lunch, participants had the opportunity to put their newfound knowledge to the test, as they were challenged to work with individuals at their table to brainstorm causes and solutions to violence. To build a better Milwaukee, participants knew that everyday community members played a vital role in the fight against violence. With the help of facilitators, participants brainstormed the following questions:



1. Now that you have heard from these various speakers and community members, what steps will you take to prevent violence in your neighborhood?



2. Outside of what has been discussed, what other factors do you feel contribute to violence in your neighborhood?

3. What do you want to see from your elected officials in the fight against violence?

4. What strategies can we use to get youth involved in more anti-violence efforts?



## Blueprint for a Safe Milwaukee

Taking participant feedback and insights from the working lunch, a blueprint was created to build a safer Milwaukee for future generations. Used by everyday neighbors and community members, this blueprint is just step one in an ongoing fight to preserve Milwaukee's future.

### Steps to Preventing Violence in Your Own Neighborhood.

Community members play a vital role in preventing violence in their neighborhoods. The key to this role, however, is active engagement by each member of the community. Whether by getting to know your neighbors, joining/starting neighborhood watch programs, hosting community events, or organizing block parties, community engagement and involvement is a primary solution to building a better neighborhood.

Getting to know the neighbors and the people in the neighborhood will lead to better communication and a stronger sense of community.

Below is a list of steps that you can take to prevent violence in your neighborhood:



#### Step One: Get to Know Your Neighborhood

- Introduce yourself and learn the names of your neighbors and exchange contact information
- Join a neighborhood association
- Talk to youth on your block

#### Step Two: Become Engaged with Your Neighbors

- Participate in local neighborhood events
- Provide guidance to neighbors and youth in your neighborhood
- Develop a resource network in your neighborhood
- Organize block parties
- Organize a summer picnic
- Develop projects to fix under-appreciated parts of the neighborhood
- Create a neighborhood watch or join an existing watch
- Explore [nextdoor.com](http://nextdoor.com) as a way of e-communicating with your neighbors

#### Step Three: Get Others Involved

- Get youth involved in neighborhood activities by empowering them and listening
- Create literature for neighborhood events to increase participation
- Converse with neighbors about specific neighborhood problems and work with them to fix them

- Bring a friend or neighbor to neighborhood events
- Give youth leadership roles within the neighborhood

#### Step Three: Engage with Resources Outside the Neighborhood

- Get to know your elected officials at the city, county, and state level
- Attend police district crime and safety meetings
- Participate in outreach programs
- Identify community resources to bring to the neighborhood
- Work with the business community on violence prevention strategies

#### Step Four: Action

- Develop action projects in the community and involved youth and neighbors
- Create a community safe space for community members to plan, build, and maintain
- Start smaller neighborhood groups on each block
- Structure neighborhood leadership roles, titles, and responsibilities
- Fix street lighting by reporting a burnt out bulb to the city
- Inform Milwaukee Police Department of areas of concerns
- Connect residents, organizations, youth, law enforcement, and businesses to collectively come up with local solutions to problems in the neighborhood
- Engage schools and school-age children in neighborhood projects
- Provide employment

#### Step Five: Accountability

- Be visible in the neighborhood
- Show interest to everyone
- Listen to concerns, do not talk over people
- Fix what isn't working, foster what is
- Be a role model
- Be more proactive and less reactive
- Build relationships, make opportunities, teach, and get involved.
- Outreach to community resources to find out additional ways to participate in anti-violence efforts.

## Factors that Contribute to Violence in Milwaukee Neighborhoods

Violence in Milwaukee does not happen in small quantities. There is not just one source or one victim; the effects do not just stay in one family. Violence pervades across our city, affecting the growth and development of our children, community morale, and access to jobs. Community members feel just as strongly about the factors behind violence as they do about the impact that



violence has on their life.

It's sad that a neighborhood affected by violence may see liquor stores, bars, and strip clubs pop up on its streets but that same neighborhood lacks a grocery store, a gym, or a library.

At the Unite Milwaukee Summit, participants recognized the underlying forces behind violence and made a conscious effort to develop them into the following list:

### Healthcare

- Mental Illness
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Lack of access to care
- Lack of exercise
- Food insecurity

### Housing

- Lack of adequate housing
- Absentee landlords
- Slumlords
- Drugs in housing units
- Limited access to shelters
- Poor lighting
- Landlords not held accountable for issues on their own property
- Vacant properties

### Family Structure

- Single parent households
- Lack of fathers in the home or parental involvement

- Breakdown of the family unit
- Family history of violence
- Lack of family resources and support
- Unsupervised children
- Lack of childcare

#### Education

- Lack of education
- Lack of youth activities after school
- Lack of investment in education
- Suspension/expulsion of black youth

#### Economic Security

- Unemployment
- Lack of resources/assistance/financial support
- Gap between the have and have not's
- Poverty
- Lack of problem-solving skills
- Lack of transportation

#### Technology

- Children gaining access to violent acts through internet, movies, and videogames
- Sensationalizing violence in the media
- Reality shows

#### Psychology

- Mental health concerns
- Boredom
- Lack of understanding of government
- Lack of problem-solving skills
- Jealousy

#### Other

- Segregation
- Drugs
- Lack of input in politics
- Lack of ownership in the community
- Intergenerational differences
- Lack of green space
- Trauma
- Lack of youth programming

## Community Needs from Elected Officials

Community members also want to see more involvement from their elected officials. At the Unite Milwaukee Summit, it was clear that participants want elected officials to have better engagement with constituents and the issues they face. The key to building this successful



State Rep. Evan Goyke (left) talks with a constituent at the Summit.

relationship is listening. Many participants felt elected officials only listen to constituents in election years and then forget about their constituents during the remainder of the year.

Community members want elected officials to take the lead in promoting the initiatives in their community, and to get involved with local events. This means being visible and reachable in the community. Below are some suggestions to help elected officials become more engaged in the fight against violence.

### Community Engagement

- Go door-to-door outside of election season to talk with constituents
- Support local initiatives in the community
- Get more involved in communities
- Listen to constituents
- Hold more town meetings
- Be proactive on neighborhood issues

### Communication

- Send updates via mail along with helpful resources
- Don't trash the neighborhoods that you represent
- Don't make promises you cannot keep
- Put words into action
- Have easily accessible information about how constituents can get involved in the fight against violence
- Use social media to access public opinion and constituent concerns

### Engaging Youth

- Educate youth on the government structure
- Mentor and support young people in leadership and career development
- Create jobs for youth in Milwaukee
- Create recreational centers where youth can go to stay off of the streets or transform empty buildings into youth community centers

- Help bridge the gap between the old and the young
- Help create after-school programs
- Be involved in youth events and block parties

#### Work Well with Others

- Help the community engage individuals who normally do not attend community events
- Encourage involvement among individuals from every faith
- Call the media out when the media is degrading others
- Work with the police to engage youth in positive activities
- Work across the political divide to help solve violence in Milwaukee

#### Policy and Legislative Remedies to Violence

- Increase funding for public education
- Rehabilitate, rather than incarcerate, non-violent drug offenders
- Enforce background checks on firearms
- Propose stronger gun regulations
- Fund libraries
- Invest in youth
- Decrease restrictions on voting
- Support, financially and socially, victims and families of violence
- Stop felon disenfranchisement
- Fund after-school programs and nutrition programs
- Increase economic development and job opportunities in Milwaukee
- Create more accountability for public tax dollars that are going to fund programs or projects in the community
- Subsidize community gardens in neighborhoods
- Create benefits for employers to create jobs for youth in Milwaukee
- Raise the minimum wage
- Better protect youth informants and other informants

## Strategies for Engaging Our Youth

Youth have a critical voice in the anti-violence effort and it is up to each of us to empower youth to find their own voice and give them opportunities to be directly involved in the fight against violence. Engaging youth means a stronger effort by the community and elected officials to relate directly with youth. This includes using updated technology, such as mobile device apps, music, and sports.

Youth spend a good portion of their day at school and it should serve as a place that can foster and grow their dreams and aspirations. By increasing funding for schools, we can offer youth more creative and interactive programming. Below are just a few ideas to help get youth more involved in violence reduction efforts:



### Community Engagement

- Allow youth to have their voice heard at critical community meetings
- Get parents more involved in youth activities and events
- Support already-existing youth efforts
- Engage youth in faith-based programs
- Organize youth forums/community brainstorming for youth
- Let youth lead anti-violence efforts and projects in the neighborhood
- Provide youth volunteer opportunities with local non-profits
- Provide youth with work opportunities

### Youth Programming

- Victim awareness and restorative justice programs
- Creative arts programs/community garden projects
- Increased youth work programs for juvenile offenders
- Truancy intervention programs
- Sports education programs
- Self-reliance and self-esteem programs
- After-school trade programs
- Peer to peer mediation programs

#### Engagement through Youthful Activities/Technology

- Start sports tournaments centered around anti-violence
- Organize anti-violence walks/runs
- Create outdoor recreational events in the summer
- Engage youth through mobile apps, music, sports, and other “cool” activities
- Provide positive outlets such as movie theaters, roller skating rinks, recreational centers
- Allow youth to participate in anti-violence efforts through videos and songs

#### Engagement at School

- Increase programming in schools
- Provide youth with well-funded quality educational opportunities
- Talk about violence in schools
- Hire teachers from the area where the students are from
- Create mentoring/tutoring programs in the schools
- Increase the number of social workers in schools
- Teach nonviolent conflict resolution skills

## Conclusion

We all have a role to play in preventing violence in our neighborhood. This report highlighted some of the critical steps that community members can take to combat violence on their block. However, change goes beyond these grassroots efforts. To change Milwaukee’s future, we need everyone at the table.

At the state level, we must pass smarter, stronger laws that thoughtfully address the concerns facing our neighborhood. We can and should ensure that prohibited individuals cannot gain access to firearms by mandating background checks on private sales of firearms. Firearms should also be properly and safely stored to ensure that children do not have easy access to them. We need to invest in long-term solutions that tackle the heart of violence: poverty, unemployment, and education. This means investing in substance abuse programs, mental health reforms, and positive activities for our youth.

This report is just the beginning. We each have a unique role to play moving forward. Together, we can fight to make our community safe again. We can lead by example and take back our neighborhoods. Call my office at toll-free 1-877-474-2000 and join me in creating a blueprint for a safe Milwaukee.

## Appendix A

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and  
Explosives  
1000 N. Water St. #1400  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
414-727-6170  
<https://www.atf.gov/>

Atonement Lutheran Church  
4500 N. Sherman Blvd.  
Milwaukee, WI 53209  
414-871-3744  
<http://at-onechurch.org/>

Big Brothers Big Sisters  
788 Jefferson St. #600  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
414-258-4778  
<http://www.bbbsmilwaukee.org/>

Burleigh Street Job Connector  
4630 W. Burleigh Street Suite H  
Milwaukee, WI 53210  
414-447-7070  
<http://www.burleighstreet.org/>

Center for Self Sufficiency  
4465 N. Oakland Ave.  
Shorewood, WI 53211  
414-332-0050  
<http://www.centerinc.org/>

Crisis Response Unit  
Milwaukee, WI  
414-278-5264

Faith Builders  
4901 S. Howell Ave.  
Milwaukee, WI 53207  
414-294-3760  
<http://www.myfaithbuilders.org/>

Impact 211  
6737 W. Washington St. #2225  
Milwaukee, WI 53214  
414-256-4808  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation  
600 E Mason Street #5  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
414-273-1815  
<http://www.impactinc.org/>

Milwaukee Area Technical College Job Center  
700 W. State Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53233  
414-297-6282  
<http://www.matc.edu/student/resources/>

Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention  
941 North Broadway, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
414-286-8553  
<http://city.milwaukee.gov/health/staysafe>

Milwaukee Working  
2233 N. 30<sup>th</sup> Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53208  
414-265-7401  
<http://www.milwaukeeeeworking.org/>

Molina Health Care  
2400 S 102<sup>nd</sup> Street #105  
Milwaukee, WI 53227  
414-847-1776  
<http://www.molinahealthcare.com/>

MOMs Demand Action  
<http://momsdemandaction.org/>

Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board  
2338 N 27<sup>th</sup> Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53210  
414-270-1700  
<http://milwaukeeewib.org/>

Next Door Milwaukee  
2545 N 29<sup>th</sup> Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53210  
414-562-2929  
<http://www.nextdoormil.org/>

Penfield Children Services  
833 N 26<sup>th</sup> Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53233  
414-344-7676  
<http://penfieldchildren.org/>

Project Ujima Manager  
2850 N Teutonia Ave  
Milwaukee, WI 53206  
414-372-5723  
<http://www.chw.org/childrens-and-the-community/violence-prevention-counseling/>

Running Rebels  
1300A W Fond Du Lac Ave  
Milwaukee, WI 53205  
(414) 264-8222  
<http://www.runningrebels.org/>

Safe and Sound  
801 W Michigan Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53233  
414-220-4798  
<http://www.safesound.org/>

Select Milwaukee  
3215 W State Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53208  
414-562-5070  
<http://selectmilwaukee.org/>

Sojourner Family Peace Center  
135 W Wells Street #4  
Milwaukee, WI 53208  
414-276-1911  
<http://familypeacecenter.org/>

Victory Garden Initiative  
1845 N Farwell Ave #100  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
414-431-0888  
<http://victorygardeninitiative.org/>

Walnut Way  
2240 N 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53205  
414-264-2326  
<http://www.walnutway.org/>

Wisconsin Anti-Violence Effort  
PO Box 170393  
Milwaukee, WI 53217  
414-351-9283  
<http://www.waveedfund.org/>