

Community Forum Addresses Recent Gang Violence

More than one hundred leaders, residents and police gather to analyze situation and recommend solutions

Written by James Macpherson | Photography by Alexis Hawkins
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More than one hundred community leaders, residents and police gathered to discuss recent community violence and suggest solutions at a forum last night in the gymnasium at Robinson Park.

"Our number one stated priority within the police department has been that there should be no more dead children on the streets of Pasadena," Pasadena Police Chief Melekian said in his remarks to the gathering.

Chief Melekian reviewed statistics of recent violent crimes within the city. In a press release handed out during the meeting, the Pasadena police reported citywide gang incidents include five homicides and fourteen attempted murders which occurred between December 19, 2006 and May 5, 2007.

The police say that "Youth Street Crimes" – defined as possibly racially motivated assaults – dropped to zero in April and May.

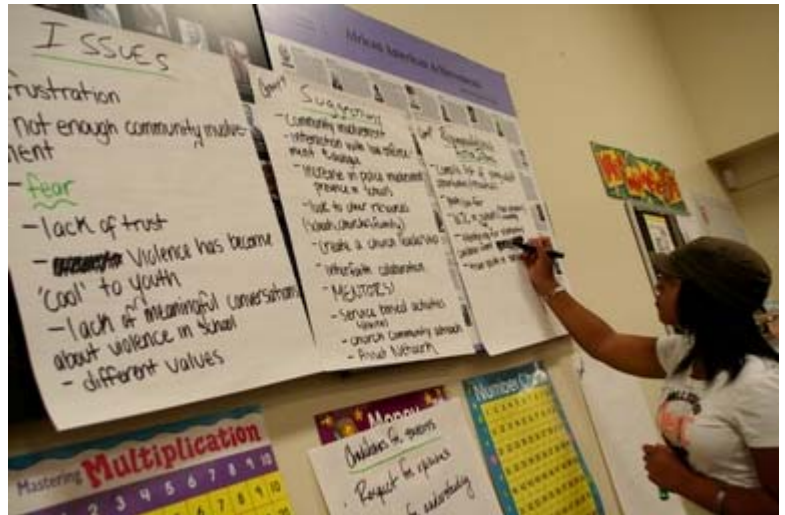
Last year, police reported fifty-six such racial Youth Street Crimes resulting in seventeen arrests. This year, there have been twelve such incidents and five arrests.

The audience heard from city and Pasadena Unified School District officials, then broke up into eight dialogue groups to brainstorm action recommendations.

"We don't want to see a repetition of the violence in the past," said Najeeba Syeed-Miller, Executive Director of the Western Justice Center Foundation, which facilitated the group discussions. "That was one of the reasons we wanted not just to do 'Q&A,' but have people deliberate individually. If you limit it to just three or four people who ask questions, you don't get to the heart of the matter."

Syeed-Miller categorized the dialogues as "constructive" and "honest" and said the groups' suggestions will be issued in a report by the Western Justice Center early next month.

The Center offers a continuing series of meetings held every Tuesday to dialogue about youth crime and gangs. For more information, call (626) 584-7494 or e-mail najeeba@westernjustice.org



Danielle Lattimore writes suggestions and recommendations made by her group during the dialogue sessions facilitated by Western Justice Center.

Youth Street Crime (Racially Motivated)		
January 1, 2006 – May 9, 2007		
SOURCE: PASADENA POLICE DEPARTMENT		
Year	Incidents	Arrests
2006	56	17
2007	12 (none in April or May)	5 (none in April or May)

Citywide Gang Incidents		
December 19, 2006-May 5, 2007		
SOURCE: PASADENA POLICE DEPARTMENT		
Gang Incidents	Attempted Murders	Homicides
19	14	5