GLENVILLE BRIGADE NEWS

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Glenville Brigade News
The Voice Of The People

When Violence Interrupts the Work, We Must Still Choose to Stay

BY VICTORIA TROTTER,

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF GREEN MOVEMENT GLENVILLE

The Day the Work Was Interrupted

It started as a celebration. A beautiful post-covid summer day and my team and I had just wrapped up a successful Instagram campaign — images and videos that captured the joy, resilience, and pride of our urban farm. We were still taking photos when the sound broke through: a flurry of popping noises, sharp and rapid. We froze. Even Emmanuel, just five years old, stopped mid-step.

Then came the backfire of a car speeding down St. Clair Avenue. Instinct took over—we ran into the hoop-house, seeking cover, hearts pounding. At that moment, we realized we weren't just startled. We were in serious danger.

Soon after, the truth emerged: we had been inadvertent witnesses to a murder. A 16-year-old boy, shot multiple times with an AR-15 across the street at our local high school. I refused to walk over to the scene. I didn't want that image etched into my memory. Others did. They described the horror in detail, but I kept my distance.

As I left that night, I told myself I was okay. After all, this wasn't my first encounter with violence. I've seen it. I've lived it. I've even been part of it. But this was different

That night, panic crept in. Dread settled deep. I began to question everything I thought I believed. Why didn't I act sooner? Had I put myself—and others—in harm's way? Was it time to move on? Did my presence in the community, the work I poured myself into, even matter?

It was a rupture. Not just of safety, but of certainty.

I've always believed in the power of community. In healing through action. In the idea that our work can transform pain into purpose. But that day I was shaken and forced to confront the fragility of those beliefs.

We Must Still Choose to Stay



Lf - Rt Victoria Trotter, Derek Witcher, Emanuel

The next morning, I returned to the hoop-house. I watered the plants and flowers, moving slowly, still unsteady. And as I moved, I meditated on those questions. Some answers came quickly, like violence can happen anywhere-no community is immune, not even ours, no matter how much love and labor we pour into it. You can run from it, hide from it, pretend it's not there–It finds a way to remind you.

And I realized something else: you can't stop violence. People will act how they choose to act. But we can find ways to ameliorate our response—to soften the blow, to resist becoming numb, to choose reflection over repression.

By the time I finished watering, I felt better. Nothing around me had changed. But I had.

I also recognized the urgent need for safe spaces—places where mediation and reflection aren't just possible, but prioritized. Spaces where healing isn't an afterthought, but the foundation. This is where restorative justice becomes essential.

Restorative justice isn't just a philosophy—it's a practice of repair. It invites us to confront harm with honesty, to center the voices of those most impacted, and to rebuild trust through dialogue and accountability. In communities like Glenville, it's not a luxury—it's a necessity. It's how we move from trauma to transformation.

I chose to stay. Not because it was easy. Not because I wasn't afraid. But because purpose doesn't disappear in the face of violence—it deepens.

We must advocate for those who can't. We must build spaces where healing is possible. And we must never forget that even in the face of tragedy, our presence still matters.

As Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

In Glenville, we are that group. And we're not going anywhere.

About the Author:

Victoria Trotter is the Executive Director of Green Movement Glenville, where she leads initiatives focused on restorative justice, eco-activism, and youth empowerment. With a deep commitment to community healing and cultural storytelling, she works to create safe spaces for reflection, resilience, and transformation in Cleveland's Glenville neighborhood.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative justice means fixing what's broken when someone gets hurt or something goes wrong. Instead of just punishing the person who caused the harm, everyone talks about what happened, how they feel, and what can be done to make things better. It's about saying sorry, listening, and working together to help people feel safe and cared for again

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THANKS AND SHOUTS OUTS

The Glenville Brigade News (GBN) Project was more than just a collaboration—it was a testament to the power of storytelling, mentorship, and community-rooted vision. At every turn, we were guided by voices and *data that not only shaped the work but deepened its meaning.

Wesley Wood, Perspective Film Works — A storytelling genius whose creative fire and tireless dedication turned this project into something truly special. His vision brought depth, clarity, and heart to every frame.

Rell Sampson, Perspective Film Works, was a mentor whose insight and integrity helped guide the narrative with purpose. Rell's heart for this project elevated the stories with intention and care was a gift to this process.

Harold Crawford, of the Harold Crawford Legacy Foundation, is A legendary Hollywood costumer whose 50-year career includes over 100 film and television credits. His foundation is dedicated to mentoring youth and empowering the next generation of diverse creatives through workshops, scholarships, and exhibitions.

And lastly, Kirby Freeman who believed in this project and in the power of community storytelling. GBN is deeply grateful for your guidance and the light you brought to this work.

*The data originates from the U.S. Census Bureau (ACS)

(COMMENTARY) —A VERY EXPENSIVE PATH – THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF VIOLENCE

By Kirby Freeman

As a writer, I normally do not directly provide my own opinions regarding the subject matter that I cover. I generally simply provide statistics and narratives to allow the readers to form their own views about the subject.

However, my efforts to highlight the impact that violence has directly had on the lives of several young people, and counselors, has challenged me to review my own opinions regarding the emotional and economic toll that violence – specifically gun violence – has had and continues to have on our communities.

One of the most pertinent items that came up during interviews with the administrators of Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance was the idea that American society pays significantly more to keep young people engaged in the enforcement and/or punishment of the law than it would to invest in the long-term health and education of these same individuals.

Myesha Watkins, who recently became Administrator of Cuyahoga County's Office for Violence Prevention, and had previously served for several years as executive director of Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance, estimated that "homicide costs" the general community costs hundreds of thousand dollars a year per shooting, and noted that the bulk of that is the costs of simply incarcerating one young person.

"When people say 'It's not their problem', they're paying for it," she added.

The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR), based on calculations derived in 2021, has calculated the unit cost of a single gun-related homicide is just over $l.2 million, while average cost, or the cost per homicide, is about $625,000. The Institute estimated the total direct cost of gun-related homicides in the U.S., at that time, was more than $8.7 billion per year.

The NICJR estimated that for non-fatal injury shootings, the per unit cost was almost $700,000, with the average per-shooting cost of about $337,000, for an annual total of $11.7 billion. The Institute estimated that the total cost of gun homicides and non-fatal shootings was over $20 billion per year, as of 2021. It stated that if indirect expenses (such as any calculation of post-conviction costs of appeals, or court costs related to death penalty charges) were included, the total cost of all shootings would be much higher. The survey included estimates of costs from 17 municipal areas throughout the U.S.

The various items included in the Institute's calculation of unit and average costs encompassed crime-scene response, hospitalization and rehabilitation, criminal justice system costs, incarceration, victim support and lost revenue.

The institute indicated that the "unit costs" calculations reflect all of the potential costs of a single incident, which would be higher than the average costs. The NICJR attributed the lower average costs to the fact that certain costs are not incurred for every incident. In its explanation, the Institute said that "because many incidents of gun violence do not result in prosecution or a trial, these estimates, or unit costs, are deflated to calculate the average cost per shooting.

By far, the most important components of the total costs inherent in shootings would be incarceration, which by far amounts to the largest factor in total costs. Of the $1.26 million in unit costs per fatal shooting estimated by NICJR nationally, incarceration comprised nearly $1 million, at $978,483, or about 78% of the total.

Of the $624,860 in average costs for fatal shootings estimated by the Institute, incarceration amounted to $481,270, or 77% of the total.

The Institute estimated the total unit cost of non-fatal injury shooting was $697,068 in 2021, with incarceration amounting to $522,249, or nearly 75% of the total. Of the $337,415 in average costs the NICJR estimated for non-fatal shooting, incarceration amounted to $184,088, or 54.6% of the total.

"The cost of this imprisonment is staggering. One national estimate revealed that incarcerating a 20-year-old for 25 years – common for a first-degree murder conviction – will cost taxpayers roughly $831,000. In California, the annual state prison cost per in $106,000, so a 25-year sentence will cost taxpayers $2.65 million," the Institute said in its 2021 report. As would be expected, California was listed as the highest cost state.

Although incarceration comprised, by far, the largest component of total costs per fatal and non-fatal shootings, the Institute calculated that hospitalization and rehabilitation, victim support, criminal justice system expenses, crime scene response, and estimates of lost revenue (including lost business opportunities, lowered property values, or reductions in tax base) were also significant cost drivers.

It probably cannot be stressed enough that the figures the NICJR used in the report were from 2021. Based on more recent data, the costs have increased significantly.

Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court estimates it costs approximately $646 per day to incarcerate one young person locally, amounting to $235,790 per year. This is up from $588 per day, or $214,620 per year, in 2020.

A compilation of data from a Google search estimated that the total cost of a non-fatal shooting in Cuyahoga County to be approximately $700,000 per incident. "This figure is based on calculations that consider the direct costs associated with gun violence, which include medical expenses, legal fees, and other related costs," the reference stated.

A May 2025 report, published by Matrassens, a British-based provider of detection technology mainly focused on security, reported that the median cost per person in the United States is around $65,000. The report indicated that the average for high-cost states, such as California, New York, and Massachusetts exceeded $100,000 per inmate per year – while the low-cost states, like Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana spend about $23,000 to $30,000 per inmate per year.

Probably the most frustrating factor about writing the articles about the personal and economic costs of violence is this America's ongoing willingness to pay for the real cost of violence – rather than search for solid solutions.

As the saying goes, "You're going to have to pay one way or another." At what point will our politicians and policymakers, and we as citizens and voters, chose another – less costly – path?

Breaking the Cycle: Youth Voices and Community Action in Cleveland

For decades, Cleveland's urban-core neighborhoods have borne the brunt of violence—its scars etched into the lives of families, homes, and futures. The toll is especially heavy on young men growing up in these communities, many of whom navigate daily threats with a quiet resilience that masks deep fatigue.

Organizations like the Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance, backed by the Cleveland Cavaliers, and Green Movement Glenville, and supported by the Cleveland Police Commission, are stepping in—not just to intervene, but to transform. Their mission is rooted in listening, healing, and empowering.

The young men in these programs, aged 14 to 17, come from Cleveland, East Cleveland, and surrounding East Side districts. Each has a story—raw, graphic, and personal. They speak of mothers who worry constantly, of friends lost too soon, and of a persistent weariness from living under the shadow of violence. Their courage isn't loud; it's in their endurance.

The GBN – Glenville Brigade News exists to amplify these voices. Its goal is to give voice to those affected directly and indirectly by crime and gun violence in the City of Cleveland. By documenting lived experiences and elevating community perspectives, providing the community with more tools like Restorative Justice that can lead to truth-telling, healing, and advocacy.

Programs like GBN offer more than just support—they offer hope. They provide safe spaces to reflect, mentorship from community leaders, and tools for conflict resolution and personal growth. Most importantly, they offer a sense of belonging and purpose.

As a community, we must ask ourselves: How can schools, families, and city leaders better support these youth? What policies can reduce exposure to violence and increase opportunity? And how do we amplify their voices—not just as victims, but as agents of change?

Youth Tales From the Hood

Michael's Story

Michael, 16, and a ninth grader at Collingwood High School, said he has witnessed gun fire specifically aimed at members of his family in front of their home within the last year. He said in that incident there were "some people shooting, but no one right up front got shot."

Along with that incident Michael said he has family members who have been lost to gun violence. This included a cousin who recently passed away, after being in a vegetative state for six or seven years, as a result of gun violence.

Michael attributed a portion of the gun violence on police "not doing their jobs" by focusing on property theft and not focusing enough on violence prevention. **"You've got police worried about car theft, but not gun violence," he said.**

Michael recounted how violence has directly impacted other members of his family. He said his father has been shot once or twice before. He also said the house his mother lived in when she was growing up.

"I think it has a big effect on people…(When) they don't come quick enough people can be dead or half-way dead on the way to the hospital by the time they show up," he added. He also added that violence very often starts with unfair fights, when individuals team up on other individuals.

Khalil's Story

"Violence should not be a natural way of life. But it probably (for a lot of people) right now," said Khalil, an eighth-grader currently attending Memorial Junior High School in the South Euclid-Lyndhurst School District. "People are just trying to protect themselves," he added.

Khalil said his older brother had previously been in the program, and said it has helped him and other attendees learn social skills required for reducing the potential for violence in everyday interactions. He said a program like Peacekeepers could help everybody at his school.

He said the violence begins with disrespect. "People talk to each other disrespectfully," he explained. He said anger at other people is deep-seated. "The person who started it is probably angry at themselves. They are angry, because they are not happy with themselves."

Khalil further explained the damage that physical violence produces by explaining how a recent serious physical fight between two of his classmates at a local McDonald's restaurant near his school resulted in that franchise unit changing its operation into a strictly take-out location. That business decision ended up having a dramatic impact on the nearby community.

Jaion, a student attending Alfred Bensch Elementary in Cleveland, said he and a friend of his were followed by other older school-age local youths for no reason near the Frederick Douglass Recreation Center in the Harvard-Lee area of Cleveland in September 2024.

Daniel's Story

Daniel, a tall 15-year-old freshman at Cleveland's John F. Kennedy High, said there is a lot of violence at his school. He said much of the violence begins over someone trying to trade fake designer shorts, shirts, or pants. He also said there are a lot of fights that could turn into serious violence over dating relationships between teen boys and girls.

"J.F.K. is a really, really violent place." He said members of his family, specifically his grandmother, wanted to transfer him to John Hay High School.

Daniel said the atmosphere at J.F.K. High was very different from his middle school. "But that changed (last) September. **I used to have a lot of fun…But now I don't want to make the wrong move."** Daniel, who appears to be a highly gregarious teenager, said it's now "harder to get along with people."

Daniel said he witnessed a violent fight between groups of teens at JFK High over the sale of fake designer clothing. "Guys came after school with a lot of their friends." He said police came and stopped the mass fight, and that the students who started the confrontation, ended up being the ones who were arrested.

"I'm tired of people risking each other's lives, just to make themselves happy," he said.

Montana's Story

Montana, one of the youngest participants in the Peacekeepers program, is 11 years old and was a fifth grader at Citizens Academy of Glenville. Said he witnessed a shooting near East 105th Street. "I was just sitting on the porch, and turned around and hear the gun." He said he saw the spark ("fire") come out of the barrel of the gun, propelling the bullet, "and the man just fell down."

Montana said that the incident, which happened in 2024, has had a profound impact on him. "I just don't want to think about it," he added.

Montana said his mother had him talk with Vince Evans, a coordinator in the Peacekeepers Alliance. He also received counseling during the school year and last summer. Since then, Montana began taking up sports as a way to help him cope with his reaction to the violence.

He said his participation in sports has helped him a great deal and has opened the door for him to make solid academic accomplishments. He said in the last semester he received "As" (Excellent) in nearly all but one of his subjects, for which he received a "B" (Good).

Even with all of that, he said things are still not exactly as they were before the incident. He said his mother "worries about me and my little sister". He said the violence he witnessed, and the help he has received since, has made him "a calmer person".

Devontez's Story

Devontez said he was sitting on a green box outside with his friend, near his home, when a car pulled down near the end of a parking lot on the corner of Woodland. There was an exchange of gunfire between a man who got out of the car, and others in the area. A bullet hit Devontez in the neck, as the man who fired his gun hustled back into the car he was in and sped away.

Devontez said he was rushed to the emergency room at University Hospital, where he was kept all night. He said he was released the next day. He said the experience has changed his outlook on the system of violence that all residents in the neighborhood have to endure each day.

"I wished it could come to a stop. But some people don't forgive," he said.

Devontez said that as he has shared his story with others, he has been starkly reminded by how many "other people are going through the same things." He said his experience has given him a deeper perspective regarding the root causes of retaliatory violence, and the need to address it.

"Why should I be beefing with them, if I have to reside with them every day," he added.

Devontez said he has since changed how he travels through the community, as well as how he spends his time. "I don't go outside (anymore) unless I have a ride. You can't just come back from anything, and try not to be a part of it."

He said he now just wants to graduate from high school, and leave the city.

Jaion's Story

"They wanted to fight. They just wanted to fight, and we didn't know why," he said.

Jaion said that, as they approached, one of the friends he was with "switched" on them, and sided with the youths that were following them. He said they followed him and his friend to a store, then tried Jaion, a student attending Alfred Bensch Elementary in Cleveland, said he and a friend of his were followed by other older school-age local youths for no reason near the Frederick Douglass Recreation Center in the Harvard-Lee area of Cleveland in September 2024.

They tried to box them in. He said he still did not know why they wanted to hurt them.

Jaion said that since the incident, he feels "less safe" and that he "trusts people less", wanting him to solely be with his real friends. He said he has not run into those other youths since then.

Jaion said his mother did not know the extent of the potential physical harm he could be in until he got into trouble for bringing a gun to school to protect himself. He said he was placed in juvenile detention for a short period, and that his mom could not see him.

Jaion, who is 13 and slightly built, said all of these experiences have made his mother trust him less. He said he has an older sibling that has been affected the same way.

He especially focused on how the threat of physical violence has affected his relationship with his mother, who he said now wants to question when he does not tell her he's going outside.

Teaching Peace by Passing Life Lessons to Today's Youth

Andre's Story

Cleveland Peacemakers' staff members, who focus on teaching valuable life lessons to the youth in the program, provide guidance grounded from their own experiences with violence. The experiences they have lived, and the stories they tell, provide a vivid picture to the young people who are now cycling through the program.

"We are a violence outreach, gun prevention program, but we do everything. We're here for the community," explained Andre Taylor, an outreach specialist in Peacemakers. He explained that although the program focuses on youth violence, they have also been involved in providing other forms of support to community residents.

He was referring to the material support Peacemakers helped provide to families affected by the extensive fire at the Garden Valley Apartment complex near 79th Street in Cleveland in late June 2025. The organization, along with other city government departments, helped provide needed food and support items to area residents.

Andre, who started his childhood in the Wade Park neighborhood, moved with his family to the Union-Miles area when he was a teenager, where joined a group that sold drugs. He said his first prison sentence was for one year, with his second sentence being three years. Andre said his third and last sentence, which included a charge of murder, was for 22 years.

He said he himself started to see other family members, namely nephews, as well as friends he grew up with being sent to prison. He said many of these people he saw coming in were "lost… not knowing what they were getting themselves into in prison."



Andre said that when he was growing up in the 1980s, it was at the start and height of the crack epidemic. But, he said it was still a time when there were still adult influences that were committed to the well-being of the community. He said today those communities lack those voices.

"We're worse off (today), because when I was coming up we had O.G.s ("old guys") that cared about the communities. The mass of the men who are around now are afraid of the kids. They don't understand them," he said. Andre said that the inner-workings of the communities where he grew up in, still had voices that young people listened to and respected. "But, (the drug) Crack took all of that away. A lot of the morals (his generation grew up with), nobody has now," he said.

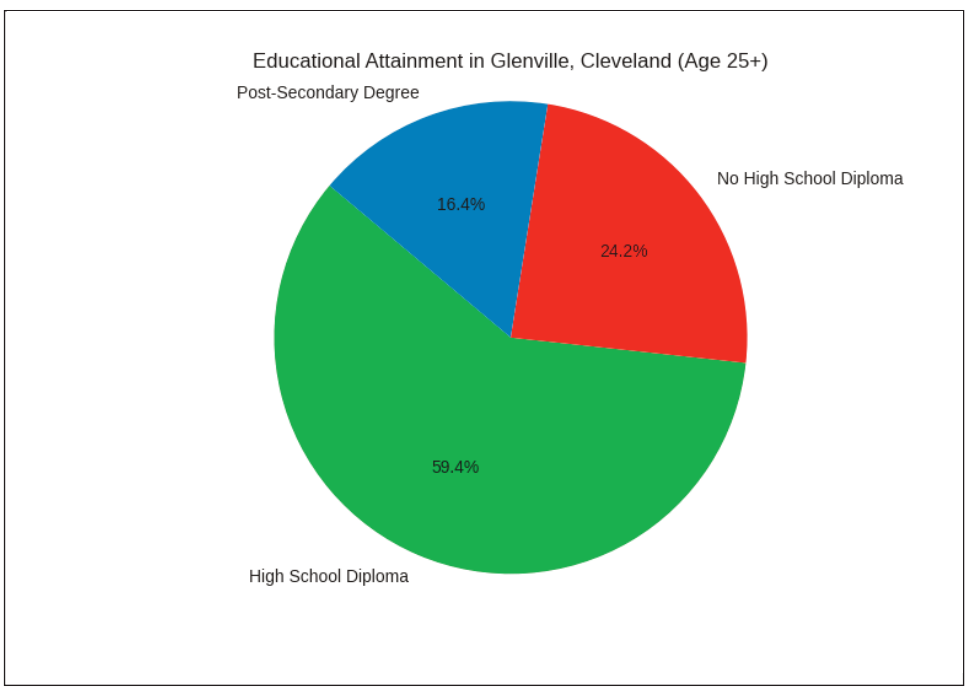
"You don't have role models in the community no more…Facebook, Instagram, Tick-tock…That's who's raising our children," Andre continued. After all of his years in prison, and the pain he caused, Andre said he began to understand that he, himself, was part of the problem. He explained that his work in Peacemakers is to help him "fix it".

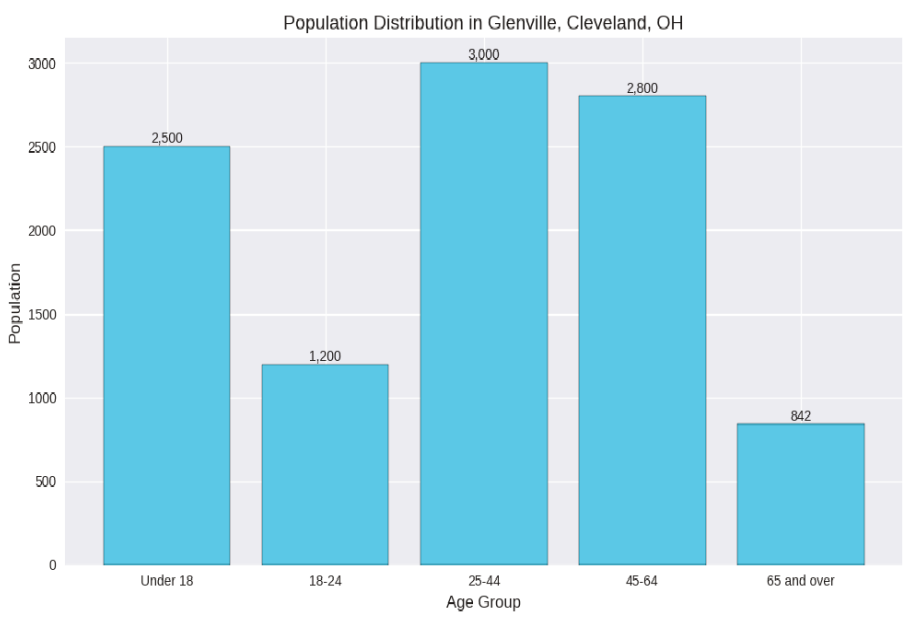
Andre said programs, like Peacemakers, can help men in inner-city neighborhoods become more willing to become involved in strengthening their neighborhoods. He said it may help them realize that they can also help others.

Andre also said he is highly conscious regarding the interpersonal dynamics he encounters with the men in the households of the young men he works with in Peacemakers. He said he sees it as his responsibility to make a solid effort to talk to the man of the household, who may or may not be the biological father of the child in the program.

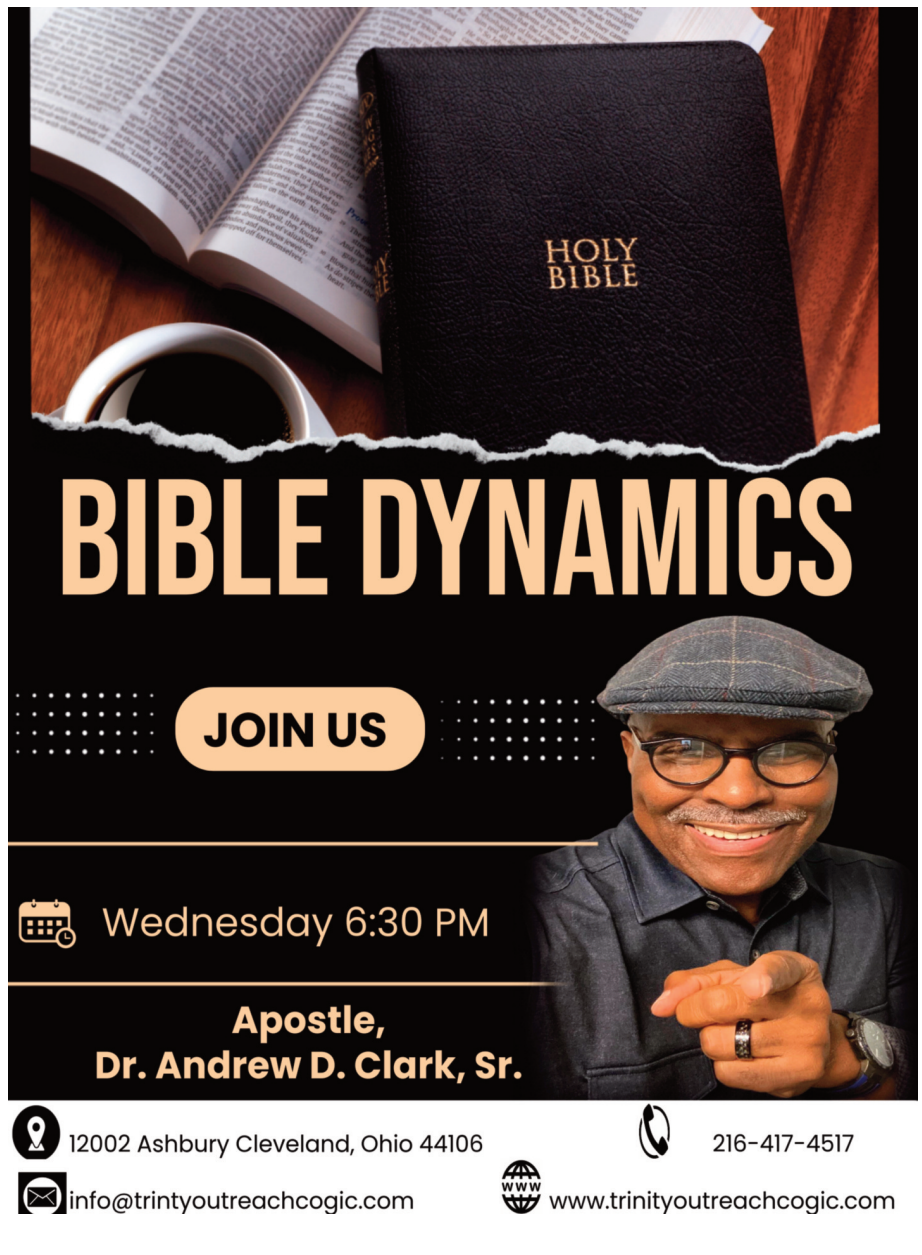
He said programs doing the work of Peacemakers have to make the effort to be respectful of all of the individuals in the lives of the children to optimize their effectiveness in the communities.

"I see a lot of guys wanting to get involved…But they don't know how. They think they lose cool points," he said. "But, come on out here and join me. It is work for (all of) us, but it's caring work," he said. Andre said. He said he loves the fact that through his work with Peacemakers, he now can "wake up every morning, and change someone's life.





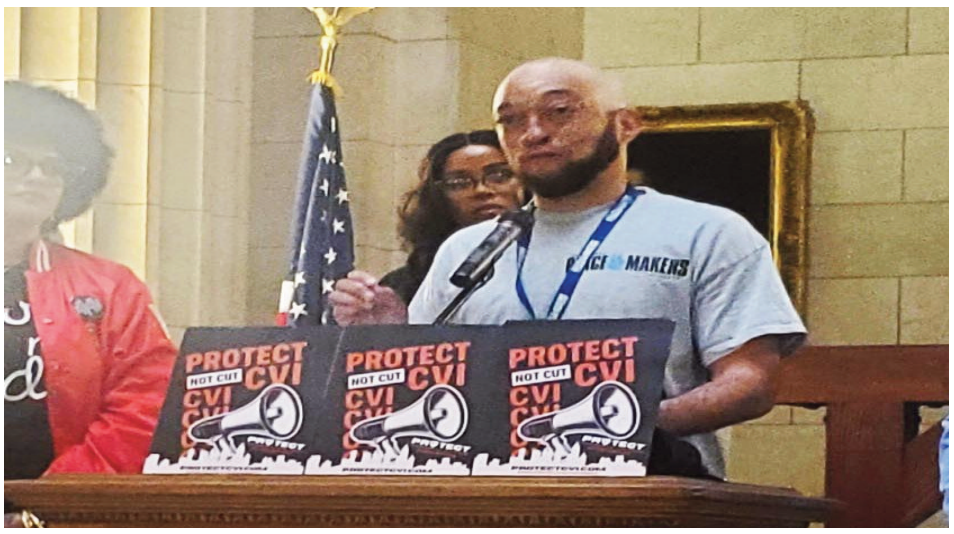




Expanding Peacemaker's Input through Visionary Outreach

Vince's Story

Vince Evans, an outreach specialist and main instructor in Peacemakers, has been with the program for over five years. He often explains that Peacemakers represents a vehicle allowing him to recreate his



life, after being incarcerated for over 24 years.

Vince said that while he was in prison, he lost several family members, and that coming back home, after being locked away for nearly a quarter-century, "was not the same". He added that all of the dwellings he and his family lived in have also been physically demolished.

"Every house I've ever lived in is gone…My whole life stripped away, by my choices. I had no choice, but to start over," he explained.

Vince said that when he was young, his family's expectations of his life trajectory were also very different from that of the results of his decisions. He said that all of the females in his family are college graduates.

Vince said he was accepted into Cleveland State University as a freshman at the age of 16. He said that during his first year at CSU, he spent the week in classes, but sold drugs on the weekend. He said soon dropped out of college, because he "wanted the instant gratification".

But, shortly after dropping out of college, Vince was convicted of murder, at the age of 17. Looking back, and thinking about the life he could have lived, had he continued his college education, Vince said he wished he had someone in his life that could have steered him in a positive direction.

He said the experience of lost life opportunities could prompt him to write his own book or memoir, on the "ten things I wished someone had told me before I started selling drugs". He said his experiences have largely provided him the motivation for his role in Peacemakers.

Vince stressed that his experiences of going both to college and prison should not be another opportunity to amplify the myth that most black men are destined to end up in prison, as opposed to the opportunity to attend college.

"Most of the time, we keep internalizing a myth. We think there are more black men in prison than in college. But, that's untrue," he added.

In actuality, Black male prison population in the U.S. was approximately 416,000, or about 33% of the total U.S. prison population, as of 2023, according to the Prison Policy Initiative. In contrast, Black male enrollment in degree-granting institutions was about 870,200, or about 11% of total U.S. student population, during the fall of 2023, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. While these post-secondary education numbers absolutely need to increase, the total number of black young men in colleges and universities was more than double those in U.S. prisons.

Vince said that the internalization of these myths regarding the black community also spawns further propagandizing regarding values within African-American culture, which can lead to increased violence within the community. Sadly, he said, this glorification of self-destructive behavior by some members of the community, makes it appear that "we're one of the few cultures in the world who celebrate the worst elements of our culture."

However, despite the negative myths and stereotypes regarding the community, Vince stressed that African-Americans continue to bear an oversized burden from the damages of violence. He said local police statistics have reported 953 homicides in the City of Cleveland over the last five years, with 825 of those victims being African-Americans, amounting to nearly 87% of the total. That's nearly twice the 46% share of African-Americans in the city's population, based on the 2020 U.S. Census.

"Our goal is to reduce gun violence through prevention, intervention, and restoration," Vince explained. He said Peacemakers encourages violence prevention by teaching young people in the program coping skills to respond to potentially violent situations, thereby short-circuiting violence before it is unleashed.

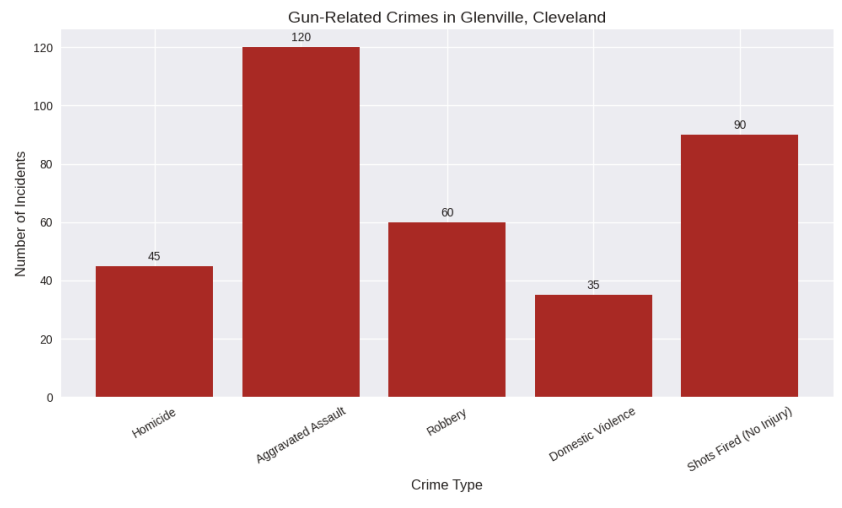
Vince said Peacemakers focuses on intervention for those who have already been involved in violence, and have faced the consequences by wearing an ankle monitor or spending a short-period of time in the hospital or incarcerated. In these scenarios, the organization will act as an ally on behalf of that young person in the court system.

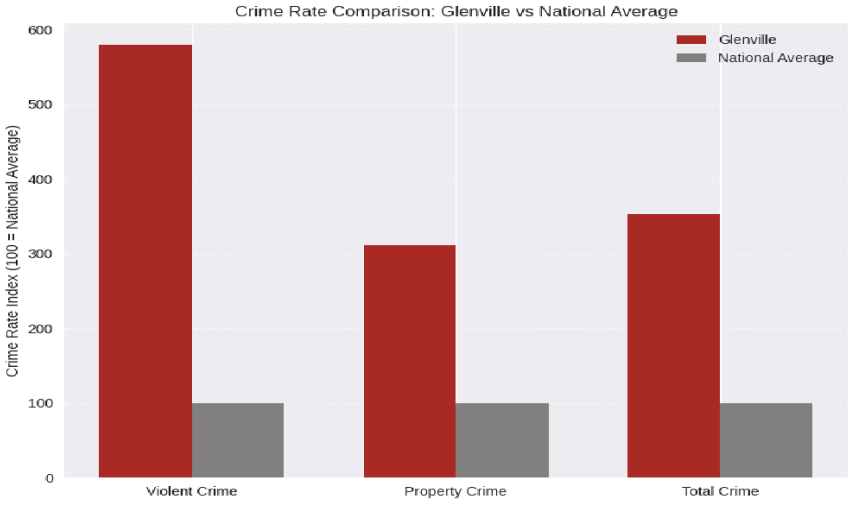
He said that finally, Peacemakers also concentrate on methods and actions leading to restoration on behalf of those young people who are returning either from the hospital or from jail, as a result of violence. He said the organization provides guidance to those who have felt the consequences of violence on how to redirect their lives toward a far more positive and productive outcome.

Vince said the framework matrix that Peacemakers includes five behavior traits – critical thinking, empathy, problem solving, goal setting, and emotional regulation. "You've got to give young people a voice," In helping them to plan the course of their futures.

Vince said institutions need to begin focusing on the social determinants of health, adding that training young people how to effectively live, learn and work can have an outsized impact on their intellectual and emotional well-being. He said institutions need to specifically focus on teaching young people on building long-term wealth-building skills – like lifetime education and savings – in the face of dramatic technological innovations, like artificial intelligence.

He said that contrary to popular belief, "A.I. (artificial intelligence) won't replace people. Humans who understand how to use A.I. will replace those who don't."







Peacemaker's Leader Moving To Make A Big Impact

Myesha's Story

Myesha Watkins, who for several years has been serving as executive director of Peacemakers, has recently been named as Administrator of Cuyahoga County's Office for Violence Prevention program. She began serving in Peacemakers in 2019.

As she has directed the activities of Peacemakers, Myesha has had her own direct experience with extreme violence, which helps give urgency to work.

When she was a 13-year-old, seventh-grader, Myesha said her and her mother were the victims of a home invasion. During the invasion, the perpetrator threatened to end Myesha's life if her mother did not cooperate and give him everything he demanded. She said her mother begged the burglar to take her own life, in place of Myesha's, if whatever valuables they had to give were not enough.

Myesha said her mom's act of self-sacrifice is an act that she did not fully understand, until she herself became a mother. She said held a great deal of suppressed trauma from the experience. "I did not think I could sacrifice my own life for another person, until I became a mother. It's been a lot of emotional and mental consequences that came from that night," she explained.

Myesha said her experience, and that of millions of others in urban communities, underlines the impact of suppressed trauma, likening it to being in war – being exposed to ongoing, constant impacts of prolonged violence. "It's just a natural impact of the human experience."

She said the root causes of violence in society generate explosive effects, likening it to "shaking a soda bottle", and "eventually when you open the top, it explodes." The explosion brings the underlying conditions to life. She noted that some of the common triggers, which would take "nothing" to make a routine human interaction turn violent would be "someone stepping on your shoe, or someone cutting you off in traffic."

Myesha attributes increases in violent behavior, specifically among young people, to an underlying divestment of the "social determinants of health", which includes "food deserts" (miles of land area, where abundant supplies of healthy food are not sold), housing instability, failing education systems, lack of sustainable employment, and general sense of "hopelessness" among residents.

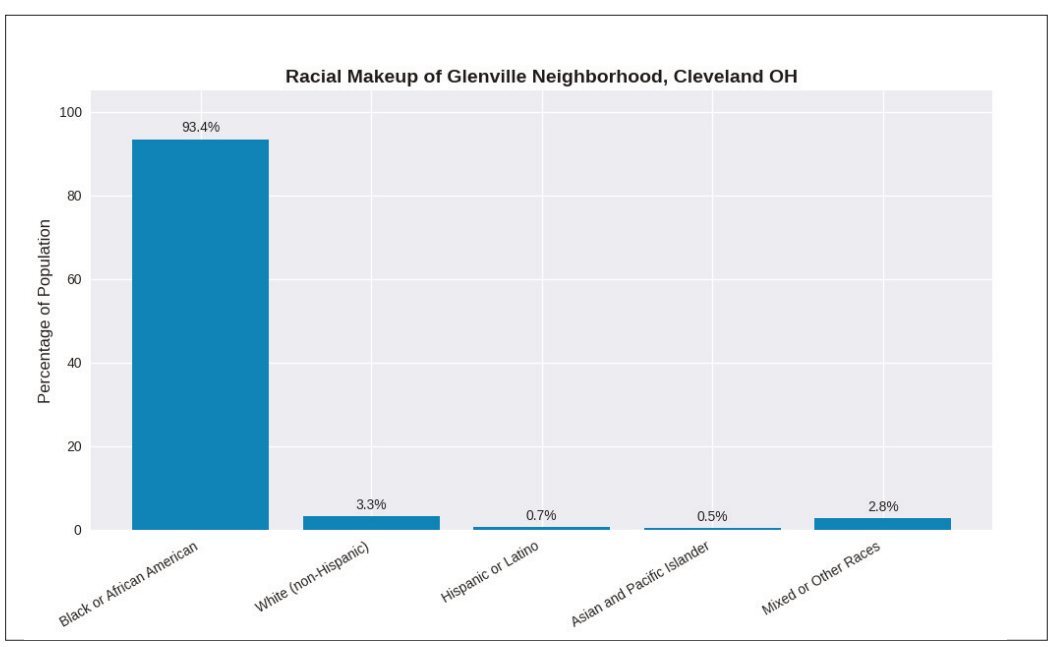
She said the overall root of violence was a "communal problem" that needs a "holistic approach" that's going to take time, commitment, and resources to address. "Anything is possible with resources, and credible people.

"You can't get anything done without resources. Thoughts and prayers are o.k. But, it (in and of itself) doesn't change anything. But, if you want anybody to change their lifestyle (from violence), you've got to give them an alternative to that. And, that's where resources come into play," she explained.



Myesha Watkins, former executive director Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance

"If there is a young person who is robbing and killing people, and he's saying 'I'm doing this to get money for my family', if he puts down a gun, what are we going to give him to pick up? That may be a mentor. It may be a job. It may be accessibility to new opportunities. It also may be relocation. But, we have to give them something. Talking at people isn't sufficient enough in changing someone's behavior or choices."





Westly Woods, Rell Sampson, founders, Perspective Film Works

Kings & Queens of Art

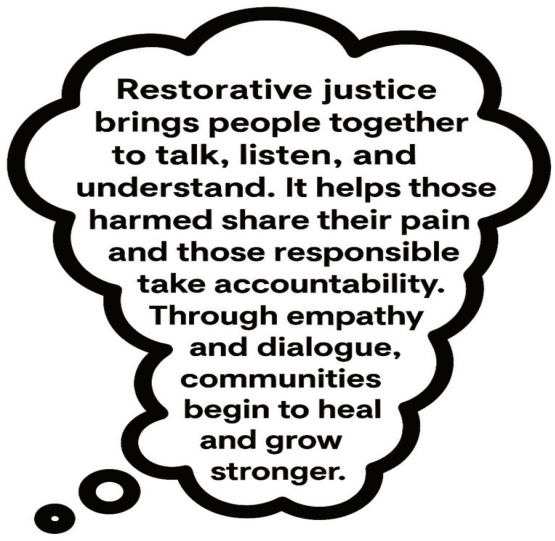
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Kings & Queens of Art (KQOA) is an Arts Service Organization that is formed with a grassroots collaboration of Artists of all disciplines with a special focus on artists from the carceral sector: presently and/or formerly incarcerated. KQOA is lean non-profit and relies primarily on in-kind support from the founder, grants and individual donations.

Peacemakers' Leader Moving to Make a Bigger Impact

Myesha Story Continued…

Myesha said one of the most enduring, and shared, successes of everyone within the organization during her tenure included Peacemakers becoming a fiscally-independent organization. It had previously been under the fiscal responsibility of Boys and Girls Club of Cleveland. Some others included diversification of funding from new contracts from the Cleveland Department of Justice, Youth Opportunities Unlimited, the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas, the Juvenile Detention Center, and restored funding from the St. Luke's Foundation, and national funding from an organization called Everytown for Gun Safety.



It is very much a question as to whether the local philanthropic dollars will be enough to offset the loss of a $2 million federal grant, which was announced last April, that previously assisted anti-violence and other youth programs. The Alliance was one of over 60 organizations expected to lose U.S. Department of Justice funding.

Myesha said the most effective response to the drastic reduction in anti-violence funding from Washington will have to come from innovative, community-based collaborations. "It's all about community partnership and collaboration. No longer can organization and thrive themselves. We have to figure out how to collaborate," she continued.

"It's going to be challenging, but the work can't stop. So, we really have to build collaborations."

Myesha said what has given her hope is when the Biden Administration created an Office for Gun Violence Prevention, it resulted in a 37% reduction in gun violence across the country between 2023 and 2024. She said it showed what was possible, if and when resources are made available to address the issue. "When there are resources, you can do anything," she added. The Trump Administration has since dismantled the office.

However, the factors that are driving Myesha are more personal. She shared that on June 24, 2024, she lost a cousin, Mandrell Hall, Jr., who was killed by gun violence in Cleveland. "That's when my personal work, and my professional work kind of collided in a way that I never expected." She also said she is aware that, because of the pervasive nature of gun violence, "there is no safe place" in the city, community, or the country for anyone, including her own children.

"So, because of the life that was lost to violence, and the lives that I am trying to prevent from being a victim of violence, I don't have an option to stop."



L-Rt Harold Crawford, Victoria Trotter, Kirby Freeman

Spotlilght on Security Innovation

Meet **Alan Lewis**, founder of Advanced Federated Protection – a Cleveland-based firm that's redefining what it means to feel secure. From hard-wired surveillance systems to torging-edge body cams, Alan's no-nonsense approach is helpp businesses and families stay protected in a rapidly evolving world.

With 30+ years of **experience**, AFP has grown from a local alarm installer into a full-spectrum suscurity powerhouse, offering: 24/7 professional monitoring, cloud-based video storage, real time remote access, and custom solutions for homes and businesses.

Learn more at a**fpsecurity.net**





Congratulations to the Glenville Brigade Movement on the successful launch of the Glenville Brigade News!

Your hard work and tenacity have truly paid off. Just as our logo symbolizes renewal, unity, and sustainability, your dedication to the community reflects those same values. The bark-textured background in our emblem reminds us that real progress is grounded in resilience — something your team has shown in abundance.

We celebrate your achievement and look forward to growing a stronger, greener Glenville together.

Congratulations from the Fatherhood Initiative's Greenhouse Growers!

We are thrilled to celebrate the launch of Glenville's *Brigade News* first issue!

Your dedication to telling the stories that matter most to our community is inspiring. It takes vision, persistence, and heart to shine a light on voices that deserve to be heard, and you've done just that.

As growers, we know that nurturing seeds into strong plants takes patience and care—just like building a platform for community storytelling. We applaud all your hard work and look forward to watching *Brigade News* continue to grow and flourish.

Here's to many more issues that uplift, inform, and strengthen Glenville!

Congratulations to Glenville Brigade News

On behalf of **Jan Thorpe**, Executive Director of **Inner Visions Cleveland**, I extend my heartfelt congratulations on the launch of your inaugural issue. This is more than a publication — it's a platform for truth, transformation, and community connection.

As the **author of the award-winning book *Inner Visions*** and the powerful new release ***The Healing Space Between Us***, I believe deeply in the power of storytelling to bridge divides and spark change. Your work reflects that same spirit — amplifying voices, honoring heritage, and building a future rooted in understanding and hope.

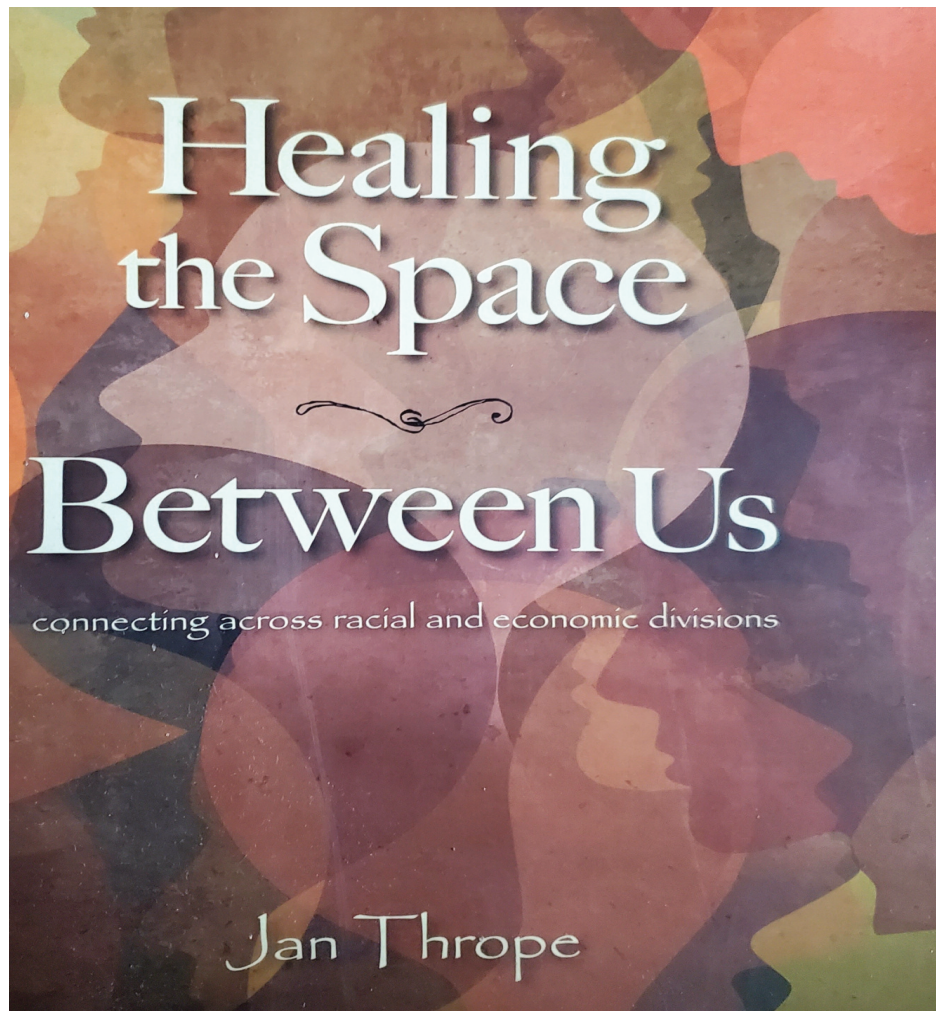
May Glenville Brigade News continue to thrive as a beacon of insight, resilience, and unity. I celebrate your beginning and look forward to your impact.

Warm regards, **Jan Thorpe** Executive Director, Inner Visions Cleveland
Author of *Inner Visions* and *The Healing Space Between Us*





Al Grimes, Executive Director of Fatherhood Initiative, Dr.Moore





Fidel Swain, Artist