



LA PEACEMAKERS INITIATIVE

Year One Report

PROCESS, IMPACT, AND INNOVATION



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Project:** From 2024 through 2026, Urban Peace Institute (UPI) will pass through \$9.6 million dollars of braided public-private funding to the 18 Black- and Brown-led community violence intervention (CVI) organizations that make up the Los Angeles Violence Intervention Coalition (LAVIC).
- **Context:** Despite an overall decrease in the city-wide violent crime rate, recent crime data shows that many historically divested and marginalized Los Angeles communities are still facing significant—and in some cases increasing—levels of violence today.
- **Social Capital:** Process findings to date suggest the necessity of established trust and credibility for institutions like UPI seeking to build CVI systems at scale, because community stakeholders will not otherwise consent to the relational and programmatic openness that successful implementation requires.
- **Administrative Responsiveness:** Process data shows that UPI's effective pass-through administration depends upon rapid-cycle iteration that tests novel hypotheses and refines operational frameworks in response to emergent community needs while simultaneously sustaining programmatic activity through close collaboration with partners.
- **Capacity Building:** The initiative has funded 27 new peacemakers, allowed service to over 1,000 new LAVIC program participants, and enabled 4,558 community activities including outreach efforts, workshops, social events, arts and culture gatherings, organizing opportunities, and meetings.
- **Violence Reduction:** As conflict mediations involving initiative-funded peacemakers increased by 59%, non-fatal injuries involving LAVIC program participants decreased by 24%, fatal injuries decreased by 13%, and retaliations decreased by 86%.
- **Process Innovation:** By working through LAVIC, the initiative leverages generations of CVI experience, extensive connectedness, and collective cohesion in order to achieve greater effectiveness than would be possible by providing ad hoc funding and technical assistance to disparate organizations.
- **Pass-through Innovation:** UPI's equity model of pass-through administration secures funding for historically overlooked CVI organizations, levels the quality of CVI service delivery at a high standard, and absorbs risk through close working partnership and shared responsibility for project deliverables.
- **Data Innovation:** UPI is spearheading LAVIC's development and adoption of CVI Empowered, a first-of-its-kind CVI data system built by and for frontline workers, which integrates tools for documentation, analysis, reporting, and data visualization in a single, accessible platform.
- **Next Steps:** In order to build on the initiative's progress, future practice and research need to move beyond demonstrating that CVI works, and focus on how, why, and when CVI works, as well as ways that CVI can work better.



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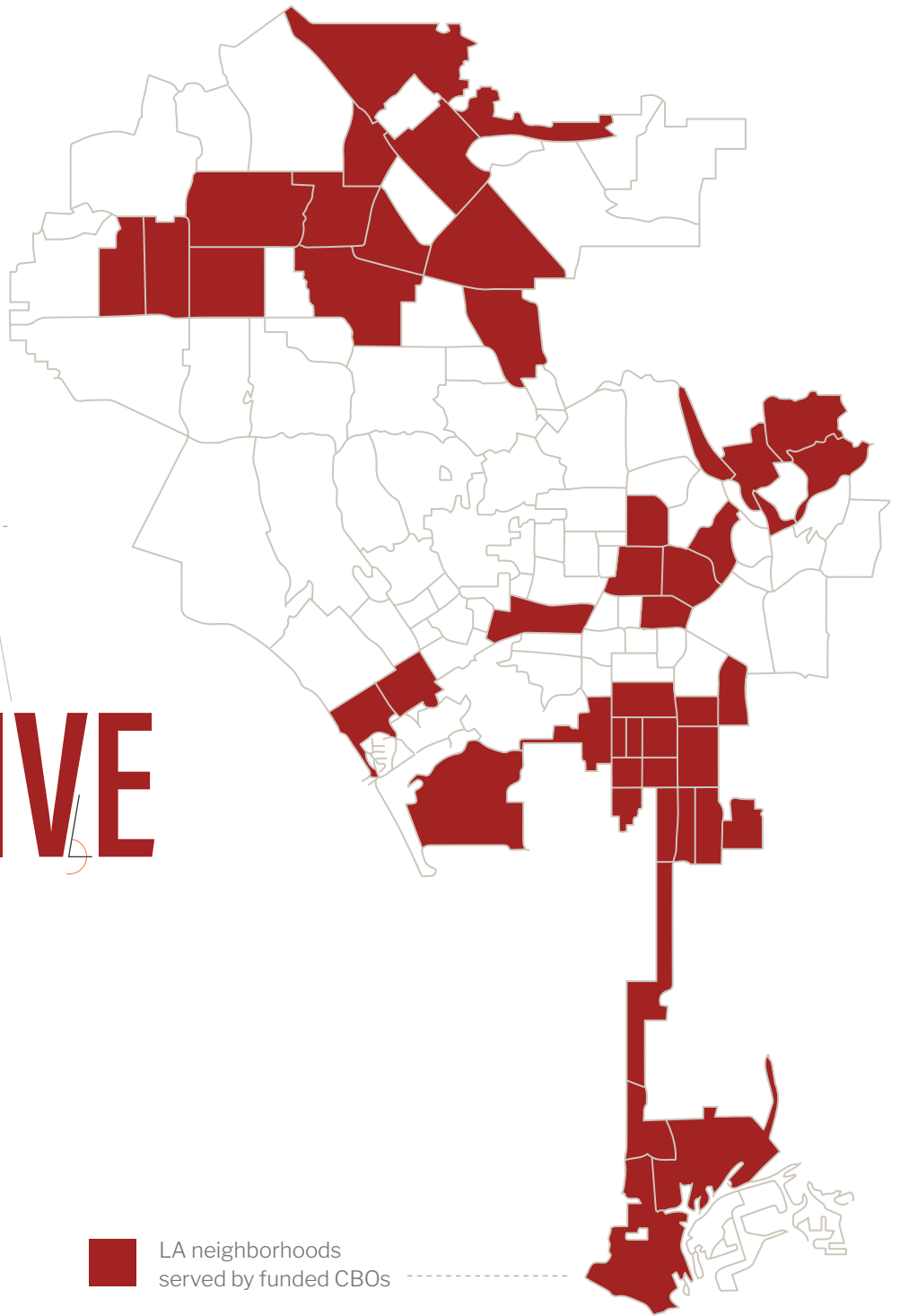
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OUR INITIATIVE

The LA Peacemakers Initiative is a groundbreaking, collective undertaking in community violence intervention (CVI) that launched in Los Angeles during the beginning of 2024 and will extend through 2026.

 LA neighborhoods served by funded CBOs



Over the course of this endeavor, Urban Peace Institute (UPI) will administer a combined \$9.6 million in braided public and private funding to a coalition of 18 Black- and Brown-led CVI community-based organizations (CBOs) across the city of Los Angeles with the goals of increasing CVI capacity and reducing community violence.

\$9.6M

in braided public and private funding

18 CBOs

in violence-impacted communities

The CBOs receiving this funding make up the Los Angeles Violence Intervention Coalition (LAVIC), one of the largest CVI coalitions in the United States. LAVIC organizations have operated for decades to protect and empower Los Angeles' most violence-impacted communities.

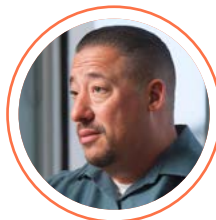
Now, the LA Peacemakers Initiative marks a historic investment in and commitment to these CBOs and their communities by funding CVI direct services, such as street outreach, conflict mediation, violence intervention, and peace agreement

facilitation; and by providing technical assistance in support of CVI infrastructure development and improvement activities like fiscal management, grant compliance, data utilization, and workforce professionalization. Beyond just increasing CVI capacity and reducing community violence, UPI and the LA Peacemakers Initiative aim to leverage collective action, shared data, and research and evaluation to make progress toward embedding CVI as a permanent and respected part of the public safety system.

"This is a moment in LA. This is the most public-private funding that we've seen invested in a long time," says Fernando Rejón, Executive Director of Urban Peace Institute. "This is the most that we've been able to invest in building the infrastructure of CVI in LA. It's coordinated with the city, and we're trying to figure out how to coordinate with the county. And it's at a point where people have more resources now than we've ever had, and it's still not enough." Rejón also notes the need to scale, and how these resources will help achieve that. "What we're doing is we're building the case for why this needs to be scaled and why it's a viable alternative to criminalization and law enforcement-only approaches."

"We're building the case for why this needs to be scaled and why it's a viable alternative to criminalization and law enforcement-only approaches."

Fernando Rejón
Executive Director,
Urban Peace Institute



OUR COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

2nd Call

Advocates 4 Peace & Urban Unity

Alliance for Community
Empowerment

Arise & Go

Brothers Taking Responsibility
of Our Community

Champions In Service

Chapter TWO, Inc.

Community Warriors 4 Peace

Detours Mentoring Group

H.E.L.P.E.R. Foundation

Moving Mountains By Illumination

Paving the Road to Success

Resilient Agency

Southern California
Ceasefire Committee

Southern California Crossroads

Strong Shoulders Agency

Toberman Neighborhood Center

Watts Life United

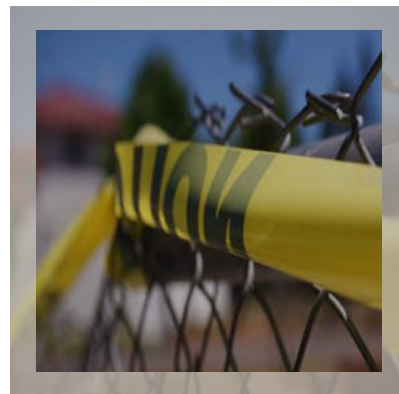
OUR MOTIVATION

Today, the LA Peacemakers Initiative takes on enormous significance for two reasons.

The first and most salient is its relationship to the current U.S. political climate, which is inhospitable to progressive social values and outright adversarial toward material efforts to translate those values into practice. Grounded in a foundational understanding that situates community violence in the present as a product of systemic inequity in the past, the LA Peacemakers Initiative stands as a test of the ability of large-scale social justice intervention to effect meaningful change while withstanding and working around deterrence from the federal administration. This represents a massive challenge, but a singularly valuable opportunity to showcase success in the face of opposition, doing so on a national stage in service of advancing public safety for Los Angeles and further legitimizing CVI.

Second, the LA Peacemakers Initiative meets the extraordinary need that violence-impacted communities still face, and publicly uplifts that need as a societal priority. The initiative combats violence and expands CVI capacity at a time when headlines emphasize an overall decrease in violent crime.¹ This mainstream narrative calls into question demand for public safety resources and casts doubt on attempts to frame community violence as a persistent problem. However, narrow focus on high-level trends overlooks local variation in a way that fails to see the necessity of CVI. While rates of violence are, indeed, down on average,² that does not mean they are down everywhere. In fact, certain communities experience increased violence even in the midst of an overarching decline in violent crime. For example, while LAPD as a whole reported an 18% reduction in homicides from 2023 to 2024, LAPD South Bureau saw a 13.2% increase in homicides during the first eight months of 2024 compared to the same period in 2023.³

This contrast belies the kind of oversimplification that aggregate trend data encourages and that misses the value of CVI in the first place: CVI is imperative to public safety not because community violence is pervasive, but because it is severe and inequitably concentrated. Over 50% of U.S. gun homicides occur within 127 cities;⁴ and the gun homicide rates are consistently at least two times higher among Latino than white communities and around 15 times higher among Black than white communities.⁵ All of this can and does remain true despite an overall decrease in violent crime—something that goes unaddressed in debates about how to interpret top-line numbers. This continuing struggle in certain Black and Brown neighborhoods—even as the general public increasingly endorses a narrative of improvement and optimism—is precisely the issue that both motivates and gives importance to the LA Peacemakers Initiative.



▼ **18%**

reduction in total
LAPD homicides

▲ **13.2%**

increase in LAPD South
Bureau homicides

Violence-impacted communities deserve the same peace that others expect—they have yet to achieve it—and any comprehensive definition of public safety in the broad sense ought to acknowledge and work to close that gap. Doing that work and redefining public safety to mean peace for everyone is the mission of the LA Peacemakers Initiative.

OUR REPORT

This report provides summary and analysis covering the first year of the LA Peacemakers Initiative, which spans February 2024 through January 2025.

It incorporates perspectives both from Urban Peace Institute as a pass-through intermediary responsible for administering funding and providing technical assistance and from LAVIC organizations as service providers directly carrying out violence intervention and capacity-building activities.

The following sections discuss the LA Peacemakers Initiative to date by focusing on three areas: UPI's technical and strategic process details and lessons learned, impact findings related to capacity building and community violence reduction, and innovations in CVI generated by the initiative. The report concludes by considering the future of the LA Peacemakers Initiative and implications for the field of CVI.

AREAS OF FOCUS

1. UPI's technical and strategic process
2. Capacity building and violence reduction impact findings
3. Innovations for CVI





PROCESS

The LA Peacemakers Initiative emerged from the dedicated advocacy and collective action of the Los Angeles Violence Intervention Coalition (LAVIC), whose members lobbied directly in order to effectively champion greater investment in community violence intervention (CVI).

Their efforts, alongside the partnership of former Congressman Tony Cárdenas and then-Congresswoman Karen Bass, were instrumental in securing the federal earmark funds that made this initiative possible.

ASSESSMENT, TIERING, AND CONTRACTING

To ensure effective distribution and use of federal earmark funds, Urban Peace Institute (UPI) implemented an assessment process evaluating LAVIC organizations’ operational and financial readiness. This involved a third-party site visit by a team of national CVI experts to assess overall service quality, a survey-based organizational evaluation delivered by UPI to gauge programmatic capacity, and a financial administration assessment aligned with federal benchmarking standards to determine fiscal proficiency. Altogether, these components provided insight into organizations’ operational capacity, readiness to scale, community engagement, service distribution, coalition standing, license to operate (LTO), and violence reduction effectiveness. These assessments built preparedness for federal funding by the time of distribution in early 2024 and formed the basis for tailored support provided to organizations by UPI in order to utilize those funds in efficient, effective, grant-compliant ways.

Following these assessments, UPI assigned each organization to one of three funding tiers ranging from advanced readiness (Tier 1) to early infrastructural development (Tier 3). In addition to guiding fund allocation across the coalition, the tiered structure identified distinct focus areas and corresponding work scopes: Tiers 1 and 2 prioritized supplementing existing capacity to expand services and improve violence reduction strategies, while Tier 3 aimed to build new infrastructure foundational to supporting future funding and long-term sustainability. To facilitate this process and align funding distribution with work scope, UPI collaborated closely with organizations to build, refine, and finalize budgets.

Beyond strong LTO, commitment to LAVIC, and representation of both Black and Brown communities, funded organizations exhibited openness to programmatic innovation, willingness to scale in response to identified service gaps, and eagerness to build the infrastructure necessary to integrate data-informed CVI as standard administrative and frontline practice.



LICENSE TO OPERATE

LTO is the permission and credibility of an individual based on their status as a community member or former gang member to engage active individuals or groups to interrupt violence, de-escalate tension, and broker non-aggression agreements as a peacemaker. This community organizing concept was first applied to the field of gang intervention in the 1990s by Howard Uller.

Seizing the opportunity to advance the field in these areas, UPI used the contracting process to formulate strategic scope of work recommendations aimed at increasing effectiveness and ensuring sustainability, which included the following priorities: strengthen administrative capacity, develop a data system, hire grant writers for coalition members, provide

executive leadership training, expand services, enhance peacemaker coordination, and institute regular coalition meetings. These recommendations not only informed the strategic direction of the initiative but also allowed UPI to allocate and distribute federal funds in alignment with long-term goals for LAVIC organizations, for the coalition, and for CVI as a profession.

UPI'S RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen administrative capacity
- Develop data infrastructure
- Hire grant writers
- Provide executive leadership training
- Expand services
- Enhance peacemaker coordination
- Institute regular coalition meetings

“When you see a place like Urban Peace Institute supporting the work at many levels, and not only just looking out for agencies that have been established for years, but getting to smaller agencies doing great work and supporting them, that automatically goes into our community. That automatically has an impact.”

Javier Martinez

Founder & Executive Director
Arise & Go



ORIENTATION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Upon contracting, UPI held in-person orientations (one for Tiers 1 and 2, one for Tier 3) to ensure collective understanding of the initiative's federal grant requirements and project expectations. These brought together all major stakeholders, providing opportunities to align subawardee cohorts behind the shared mission of the initiative and to collaboratively ratify scopes of work. UPI has, since that time, facilitated ongoing reorientation sessions as needed to address emergent needs and maintain continued compliance.

During the implementation phase, LAVIC organizations initiated hiring and capacity-building activities,

while UPI administered peacemaker certification and professional development trainings to equip this expanded workforce with the necessary skills and expertise for effective on-the-ground intervention work. The tiered framework informed the design of technical assistance tracks oriented to organization-specific needs. For Tiers 1 and 2, technical assistance focused on program development and meeting service delivery goals. Tier 3 technical assistance primarily emphasized capacity-building support. Technical assistance was closely integrated with monitoring efforts, concurrently providing guidance on federal grant compliance to confirm proper use of funds and resource management. Internally, UPI strengthened its grants monitoring infrastructure by onboarding additional finance and compliance staff in order to guarantee comprehensive, attentive, and effective oversight and support throughout the administration process.

DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING

For the purpose of capturing progress toward capacity building and violence reduction grant deliverables, UPI began gathering monthly programmatic data reports from every participating organization at the time of implementation, also providing technical assistance related to data collection and management as needed. Additionally, in service of the initiative's long-term goal of strengthening data infrastructure within the coalition and for the benefit of the larger CVI profession, UPI facilitated LAVIC's collaborative development of CVI Empowered, a CVI-specific data system designed by practitioners, for practitioners. CVI Empowered provides organizations—for the purpose of the initiative and beyond—with a system that is tailored to their specific needs and which merges documentation, data analysis, and data visualization in a single platform.

For the LA Peacemakers Initiative and other projects, UPI partners with UC Davis Centers for Violence Prevention researchers Dr. Shani Buggs and Dr. Nicole Kravitz-Wirtz. They collaborate with UPI regularly on initiative matters pertaining to problem conceptualization, data collection, measurement, and analysis, and will evaluate the initiative in its totality at the time of completion (currently scheduled for December 2026). In support, Dr. Andrew Papachristos and Soledad McGrath at Northwestern University's Center for Neighborhood Engaged Research & Science (CORNERS) provide ongoing consultation in these same areas. Collectively, Buggs, Kravitz-Wirtz, Papachristos, and McGrath make up a team of leading CVI researchers and experts whose invaluable contributions help to foster innovative thinking and inform best methodological practice over the course of the initiative for UPI's internal research and evaluation team led by Dr. Josh Gregory.

PRIVATE FUNDING INTEGRATION AND BRAIDED ADMINISTRATION

Nine months into the initiative, UPI integrated private funding from Ballmer Group into the established flow of financial resources from the federal earmark that launched the process. By this point, the government funds—more restrictive by their bureaucratic nature—had proven integral for conventional purposes like staffing organizations and shoring up core programmatic infrastructure.

Private funds, however, enabled UPI to take a more comprehensive, innovative, and accommodating spending approach with regard to meeting community need; which, in turn, allowed for programming flexibility at the street level that is typically precluded by dependence on government funding alone.

UPI applied an adaptive approach to distributing the private funds, rolling them out to participating organizations in iterative phases, or waves. This



cadence allowed for more dynamic responsiveness and attunement to community need in real time than was previously permitted under the need to adhere solely to federal grant administration regulations. Selections for each wave were contingent on degree of successful fiscal management to date, demonstrated compliance with federal grant activity guidelines, and self-reported financial and programmatic assessments. The pilot wave included organizations across all project tiers that

had shown strength according to these measures so far. This provided an opportunity to test and refine the more flexible and purposeful funding approach with the intention of shaping a more seamless and targeted distribution mechanism for application across subsequent waves.

At the same time, UPI helped organizations to adjust their budgets in alignment with evolving needs, prioritizing private funding allocation for items that would have been constrained or disallowed by federal funding rules. This equipped organizations with the knowledge and level of preparedness necessary to manage both funding streams in ways that would maximize their combined value as means with which to build capacity and reduce violence. To support this financially and operationally complicated process, UPI held one-on-one workshops and tailored technical assistance sessions focusing on fiscal management and programmatic coordination strategies relevant to effective braided funding utilization.

This framework fully actualized the potential of braided funding by creating strategic, adaptable, and sustainable resource pathways to organizations.

These, in turn, allowed for the continuous material growth opportunity required for capacity building sufficient to meaningfully increase direct intervention in community violence. Throughout the process, UPI supported organizations in using public funds responsibly and allocating private funds tactically in order to both comply with federal guidelines and respond innovatively to complex community needs, all with an eye toward maximizing impact for the organizations and those they serve. Today, UPI continues to monitor and provide ongoing support to organizations, ensuring programmatic longevity, financial sustainability, and funding compliance while maximizing immediate benefit and long-term growth potential for LAVIC and CVI.



PROCESS FINDINGS

1. Organizations across all tiers demonstrated high levels of infrastructural and staffing need related to financial management, grant compliance, and administrative capacity.
2. UPI technical assistance most effectively facilitated improvement to organizations' internal processes when delivered via case-specific problem solving rather than general instruction.
3. Hands-on collaboration from UPI imparted to partner organization personnel new leadership skills and strategies that increased CBO agency and autonomy.

IMPACT



When it comes to demonstrating impact, community violence intervention faces a complicated but unavoidable obstacle: How to tell a compelling story about something that does not happen.

That is really the greater goal of community violence intervention (CVI) and the benchmark against which progress is measured—the freedom to live in a community where violence does not happen. In pursuit of this, it is far easier to operationalize the categorical nature of failure than the incremental reality of success. When the homicide rate goes up, lives lost give a clear metric to point at and speculate about how things could have or should have gone differently. Conversely, the factors that ultimately save a life that might otherwise have become a community violence fatality are too numerous to account for exhaustively, and often impossible to delineate in ways that allow a causal claim that they directly prevented a homicide.

This suggests a need for CVI to define itself and evaluate impact beyond direct intervention and violent crime reduction. Doing so can not only capture a more comprehensive measure of progress, but also better represent to the field and to stakeholders the myriad ways in which the work of CVI extends across a vast repertoire of community-building activities that empower residents, bring joy to neighborhoods, and inspire youth.⁶ **Safety means more than just the absence of violence, and that is the story that CVI needs to tell.**

The LA Peacemakers Initiative hopes to highlight the proactive and positive community development work that CVI undertakes. That intention is reflected in the type of impact data presented here.

“CVI creates the space for nothing to happen in terms of violence or retaliation. Just the sheer presence of intervention does that. Whether it’s the programs, the individuals, or the notion that CVI is available in that community space. The community can feel the difference in the work that happens.

Ben “Taco” Owens
Founder & Executive Director
Detours Mentoring Group





CAPACITY BUILDING AT A GLANCE

1,027

new participants

1,149

outreach efforts

1,174

workshops

650

social events

255

arts & culture
gatherings

491

organizing
opportunities

834

meetings

HOW WE GREW

The primary objective of the LA Peacemakers Initiative is to build CVI capacity. To that end, the initiative has so far generated tremendous impact across the network of Los Angeles Violence Intervention Coalition (LAVIC) organizations spanning the city. In addition to the already described structural increase in organizational capacity evident through the infrastructure scaffolding enabled by technical assistance from Urban Peace Institute (UPI), capacity building can be operationalized according to workforce expansion and output.

To date, the LA Peacemakers Initiative has funded **25 new community intervention workers (CIWs)** and **2 ambassadors** at LAVIC organizations. Introducing these additional staff while simultaneously building new and refined infrastructure has

allowed CBOs to enroll **over 1,000 new program participants** and grow their community presence through outreach, workshops, social activities, arts and culture gatherings, organizing efforts, and community member meetings. Taken together, these developments reflect the expansive work that CVI entails. They lay the foundation for a vision of safety that means more than just a reduction in violence, and which community members feel as social and material improvement in their day-to-day lives.

CIWS AND AMBASSADORS

CIWs are professionally certified peacemakers; ambassadors are entry-level peacemakers still acquiring the experience, skill set, and formal training necessary for full CIW certification.

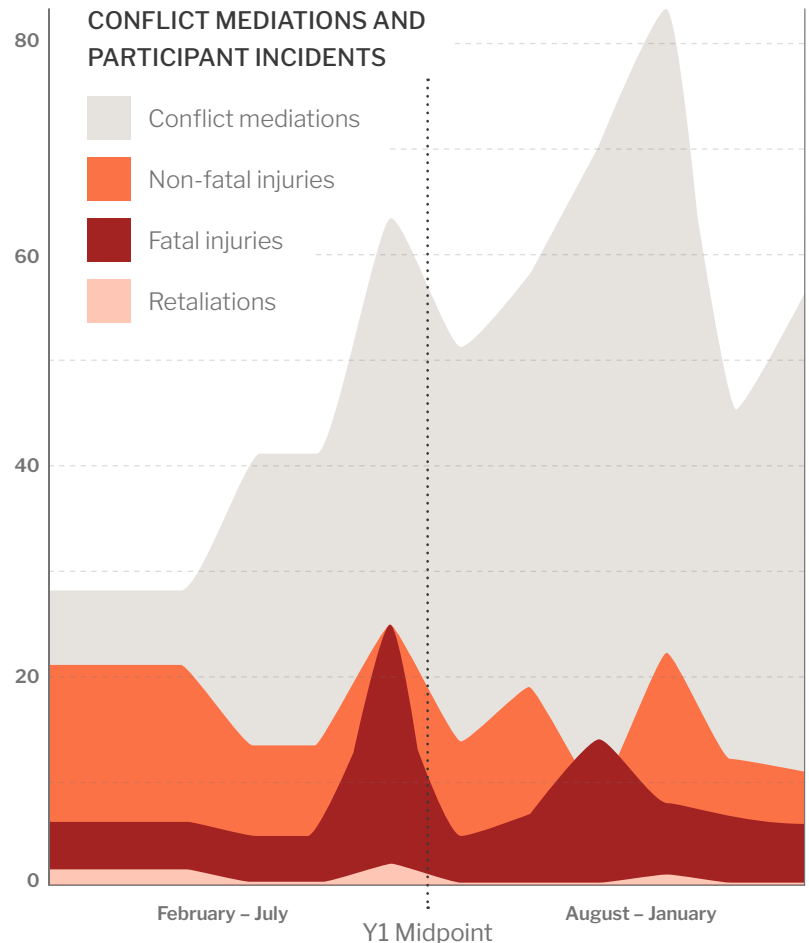


WHAT WE CHANGED

From the initial to the latter half of the LA Peacemakers Initiative's first year, total non-fatal injuries involving LAVIC program participants decreased by 24%, total fatal injuries decreased by 13%, and total retaliations decreased by 86%.

The need to more rigorously engage indicators of community building as a way to better identify success and more fully ascertain impact in CVI runs parallel to but does not replace the convention of looking for evidence of CVI effectiveness in violent crime rates where peacemakers operate. In keeping with that practice, the LA Peacemakers Initiative relies on regular frontline, programmatic reports from LAVIC organizations to directly track changes in rates of violence involving program participants.

Comparing this information with records of CIW and ambassador peacemaking activity documented by these same CBOs supports an inference of correlation between LA Peacemakers Initiative on-the-ground efforts and both violence perpetration and victimization among the LAVIC program participant population.



“Now we have more investment in CIWs; now we have communities that will feel safe; now we have more people indigenous to those communities who are trained in violence intervention work. We have an alternative to suppression and police as the only source of public safety. We have a growing peace army. We’re pulling in a new, younger generation of community violence intervention workers.”

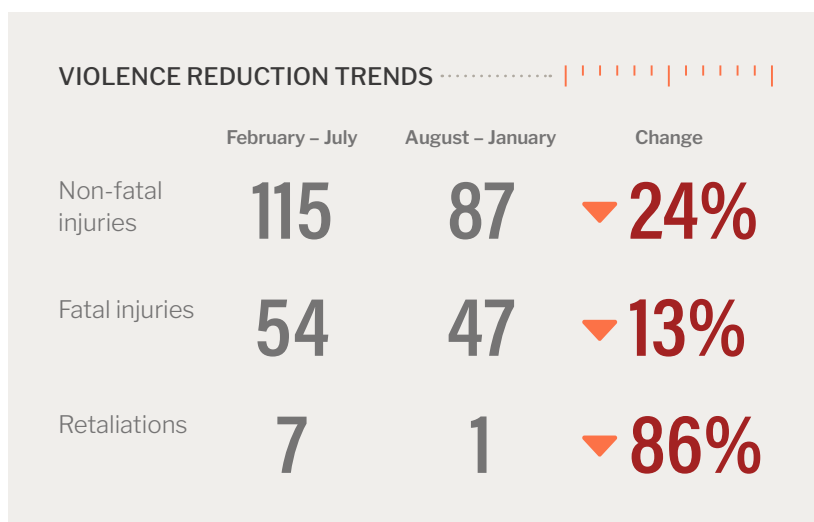
Claudia Bracho

Senior CVI Specialist/Manager, Urban Peace Institute

“It’s allowed us to send out individuals with lived experience who understand the community and are ingrained in it, so we have a tremendous network. This enables us to get to the source of what’s going on with issues in the community before they happen.



William “Blinky” Rodriguez
 Founder & Executive Director, Champions In Service



Concurrent with the aforementioned decreases in community violence, total conflict **mediations involving CIWs or ambassadors funded by the LA Peacemakers Initiative increased by 59%**. These data support the inference of a correlation between the overall increase in mediations involving CIWs or ambassadors funded by the LA Peacemakers Initiative and the overall decrease among LAVIC program participants in non-fatal injuries, fatal injuries, and retaliations from the initial to the latter half of the LA Peacemakers Initiative’s first year. This finding points to promising funding impact and program effectiveness while also implying a continued need for sustainable, long-term investment and expanded CVI services.

William “Blinky” Rodriguez regularly feels the initiative’s impact on the ground through his CBO, Champions In Service. “This is helping us reduce

violence—to intervene and prevent something that’s going to happen if we’re not attentive to it. It’s allowed us to send out individuals with lived experience who understand the community and are ingrained in it, so we have a tremendous network. This enables us to get to the source of what’s going on with issues in the community before they happen.” And those moments when violence persists, although fewer, are just as crucial. For CVI, the work does not stop at the crime scene. Rodriguez explains, “If there is a casualty, we’re able to bring some wellness to the family. We help the family on their journey through a funeral for their own child. Who’s prepared to bury their own kids? We’re able to lead them to supports.” Peacemakers do more than intervene in violence; they show communities the way to hope and healing.

INNOVATION

As a historically significant, large-scale, nationally visible CVI project, the LA Peacemakers Initiative has a responsibility to produce innovation in both strategy and execution.



Since its conception, the initiative has set forth new conventions for the field of CVI and redefined numerous standards of practice. These innovations arise from 1) the close connection of Urban Peace Institute (UPI) and the LA Peacemakers Initiative to the Los Angeles Violence Intervention Coalition (LAVIC), 2) the equity model of community-aligned partnership that structures UPI's identity as a pass-through intermediary organization, and 3) the community-led development of the CVI Empowered data system by and for frontline practitioners. The following sections discuss these emergent innovations from the first year of the initiative.

“It started right here, in L.A. This group of people and organizations got together and made a commitment to the work as a coalition. We just want to continue to rise, to get better, to be accepted in other communities. We want people to believe in it. We are one of the best entities out here.”

Jerald “Pee” Cavitt
Founder & Executive Director
Chapter TWO, Inc.



PROCESS INNOVATION: THE PEOPLE

The way that the LA Peacemakers Initiative engages with and leverages the rich history, broad scope, and longstanding unity that characterize LAVIC represents an innovative approach to CVI. The initiative was, in fact, built around LAVIC, not the other way around. As one of the largest CVI coalitions in the country, LAVIC is a pillar of the local CVI community and leader of the profession nationally.

HISTORY

Formed in 2020 and still highly active, LAVIC pre-dates and will exist beyond the initiative. In 2021, LAVIC successfully advocated for salary increases for peacemakers who were, at the time, not making livable wages.⁷ Today, with Los Angeles hosting the upcoming 2028 Olympic Games, LAVIC is already preparing for the negotiations that will determine the extent to which the influx of city funding benefits violence-impacted communities and catalyzes sustainable progress toward a just and equitable vision of public safety. The individuals and families who comprise LAVIC organizations bring decades, and in some cases even generations, of collective CVI experience. By building on this preexisting wealth of knowledge and practice expertise, the LA Peacemakers Initiative begins from a position already situated at the forefront of the CVI field and thus poised to deliver meaningful change to violence-impacted communities.

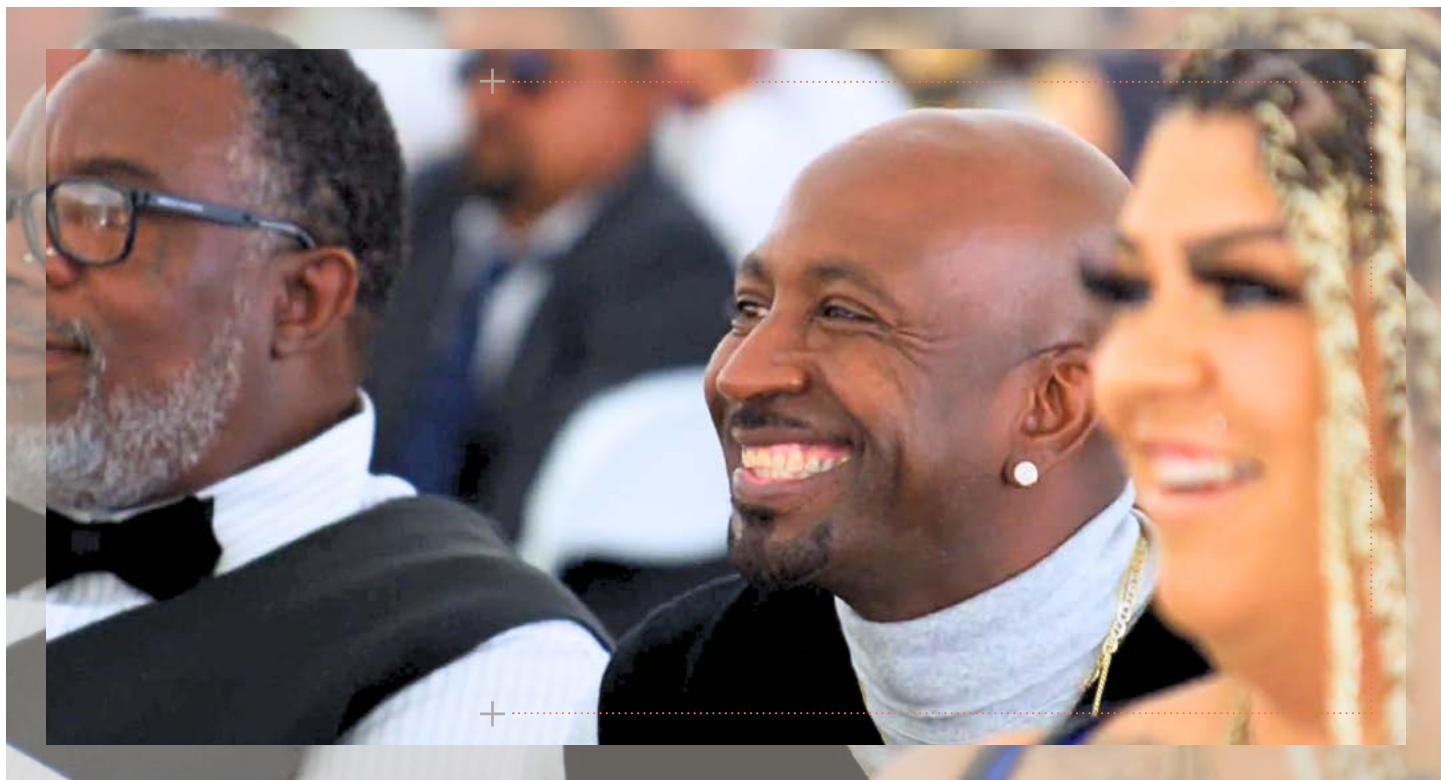
SCOPE

Because grassroots activism and advocacy are so fluid, making precise comparisons difficult at any given moment, LAVIC is usually qualified as *one of the largest CVI coalitions in the United States*. However, although still impossible to say definitively, LAVIC almost certainly exceeds the scope of any CVI coalition of *frontline practitioners* in the country. Consequently, LAVIC operates with an unparalleled breadth and depth of connectedness throughout the communities it serves. In a field like CVI, this does not simply affect the amount of frontline work that LAVIC can take on, but the quality and effectiveness of that work.

Research has demonstrated that gun violence tends to cluster within social networks⁸ and that exposure to gun violence can increase individual odds of victimization⁹. CVI embeddedness within the community social environment therefore directly influences peacemakers' ability to detect and intervene in the spread of violence where and when it happens. In this way, LAVIC's scope and corresponding deep social connections facilitate services under the LA Peacemakers Initiative that reach a wide area; but more importantly, services that actually locate and personally reach those individuals at greatest risk within that area.

UNITY

LAVIC achieves a form of unity that is relatively rare in CVI by bridging the racial gap to bring together Black and Brown organizations and professionals for mutual support, coordinated violence intervention, and collective advocacy. This citywide cohesion is not just strategic, but sincere, and is one of the defining characteristics that makes Los Angeles a national leader for CVI, both historically and in the present. The most meaningful result of this unity is a shared sense of commitment to the work and to each other that endures even as the field professionalizes, and which sustains CVI in spite of challenges. Beyond that, though, LAVIC leverages this unity to set a visible example of grassroots strength and success among the city's marginalized groups and to wield public influence for the material benefit of violence-impacted communities—a fact that is most recently evident in the \$9.6 million secured by the LA Peacemakers Initiative. The alignment of the initiative directly with the coalition membership and mission yields innovation by uplifting and amplifying LAVIC's voice and change-making capacity in service of a form of collective intervention that would not be possible had UPI decided instead to fund and provide technical assistance to CVI organizations merely working near each other rather than with each other.



PASS-THROUGH INNOVATION: THE EQUITY MODEL

The common objective that unifies the component organizational parts and practices that constitute UPI as an intermediary pass-through entity is, in a word, equity. Without always necessarily labeling the approach explicitly as such, the distinctive feature of the orientation to CVI that makes UPI both unique and uniquely successful is radical, strict adherence to equity in principle and action. As simple as this may sound, it is indeed innovative. To stand symbolically for equity has grown, in recent years, quite common; to effectively and consistently deliver services in an actually equitable way is rare. The LA Peacemakers Initiative exemplifies this follow-through from philosophical commitment to equity at the street level.

“Funders tend to lean on agencies that can handle the funds, have the capacity and grant writers. But it excludes so many grassroots entities that have the attention and the support of the people.”

Jasmine Desenclos

CVI Project Manager,
Urban Peace Institute

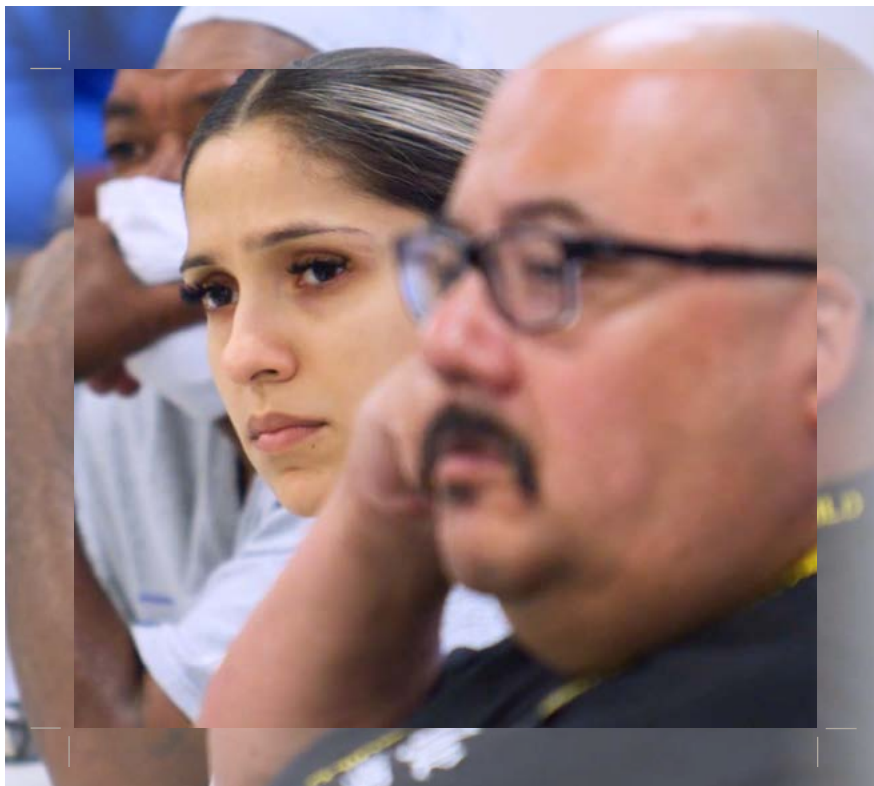


TIERING

For starters, the fact alone that Tier 3 even exists within the funding and technical assistance provision structure is quite possibly the most progressive and systemically transformative innovation that the initiative brings about. As CVI Project Manager at Urban Peace Institute, Jasmine Desenclos, explains, “Funders tend to lean on agencies that can handle the funds, have the capacity and grant writers. But it excludes so many grassroots entities that have the attention and the support of the people.” Inclusivity extended to smaller organizations, newer programs, and quintessential “mom-and-pop” shops—not just in the form of a gesture or acknowledgment, but dollars—is fundamentally changing the CVI landscape in Los Angeles and breaking with precedent to set a new standard for advancing the field nationally. “They have been doing the work and servicing the community out of pocket for many, many years,” says Desenclos. “So, to not only help them build capacity but add funding to grow is very unique.”

Everyone, from community intervention workers (CIWs) to administrative and elected officials, recognizes the unprecedented shift toward equity in opportunity and resources ushered in by the tiering system that guides UPI’s intermediary work and distinguishes the LA Peacemakers Initiative.





SCAFFOLDING

The LA Peacemakers Initiative does not just include Tier 3 organizations, but champions their effectiveness and impact, backing up the commitment to equity with action in a way that is critically innovative for the CVI profession. This manifests in the programmatic scaffolding that UPI provides to LAVIC organizations in the form of technical assistance, an integral deliverable for the initiative's capacity building objective. Conventionally, along with funding, the greatest amounts of time and effort invested in technical assistance—if any, given that many pass-through intermediaries do not provides hands-on support—might go to the recipients facing the greatest operational complexity rather than the greatest opportunity to grow. That process only further stratifies the field, widening the resource gap between large and small community-based organizations (CBOs) until size alone dictates who thrives and who is forced out. Such an approach excludes developing CBOs and deprives the neighborhoods that depend on them for essential community safety resources.

“ *This process is very much about being equitable. We're going to fund everybody. The amounts are going to differ, but our level of investment will be shared across the board, and that includes our time.*

Carlos De Santiago

CVI Project Manager,
Urban Peace Institute



By applying an equity-based approach to technical assistance, UPI aims to use the LA Peacemakers Initiative as a vehicle with which to raise the level of service quality across all of LAVIC to a uniform standard of professionalization and expertise that secures a place for everyone in the vision of CVI as a permanent part of the public safety system.

RISK SHARING

Perhaps the truest sign of equity put into practice through the LA Peacemakers Initiative is the way that UPI shares risk with participating LAVIC organizations, from the most established Tier 1 institution to the newest Tier 3 CBO. UPI shares risk by standing with partners in taking joint responsibility for success. This level of accountability is neither necessary nor typical for an intermediary organization like UPI. Pass-through administrators can write themselves into grant contracts in different ways. In theory, UPI could limit its involvement to a strictly distributive role in which accountability extends only as far as securing and transferring funds for LAVIC. Yet, through project deliverables, UPI has structured its obligations to initiative funders in terms that necessitate a commitment well beyond funding stewardship, all the way to street-level outcomes. With the LA Peacemakers Initiative, UPI explicitly—and contractually, per grant documentation—pledges to reduce violent crime by 10% in five LA neighborhoods over two years. By taking this position, UPI succeeds only if and when LAVIC succeeds. This contingency affirms UPI's willingness to stand by partners for the entire journey from procuring funds to guaranteeing community safety for those at greatest risk of experiencing violence.



DATA INNOVATION: THE SYSTEM

At the time of the LA Peacemakers Initiative orientation, UPI began facilitating LAVIC's development and adoption of CVI Empowered, a first-of-its-kind CVI data system created by frontline workers, for frontline workers. CVI Empowered integrates tools for documentation, analysis, reporting, and data visualization in a single platform. It is designed to be accessible even to those with little technological experience and built to be used on the go, enabling CIWs and other CVI professionals to comprehensively capture their work without having to step away from community engagement. CVI Empowered is intended for use throughout and beyond the initiative and will continue expansion

CVI Empowered

to serve additional CVI organizations in the future. The system is innovative not only from a technical perspective, but socially, in so far as it practically advances CVI's intention to shift field-wide professional norms toward routine data utilization and evidence-informed action. In this way, CVI Empowered will continue to prove valuable to on-the-ground strategy (e.g., resource deployment), fundraising (e.g., data-driven grant writing), and advocacy (e.g., empirically supported policy proposals and legislative demands). Today, CVI Empowered is widely used across LAVIC while the last iterations of tool development are completed and adoption rolls out to final organizations.



COLLABORATION

The process behind CVI Empowered has centered collaboration from the start. In fact, the very idea for the system drew inspiration from a previous CVI mapping project collaboratively discussed between UPI and members of Chicago CRED, Jalon Arthur and Melvyn Hayward Jr. (now senior director for the City of Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development, or GRYD). Since that time, the work to envision, build, and implement CVI Empowered through the LA Peacemakers Initiative has remained dedicated to collaboration that is innovative for the ways in which it distributes decision-making power and expert authority among LAVIC members—not researchers, technicians, or consultants. This has involved coalition-wide steering committee meetings, regular UPI site visits to every participating organization, stakeholder interviews, continuous feedback, ongoing iteration, and hands-on training.

Everything about CVI Empowered—from the data entry fields, to the functionality, to the name itself—is informed directly by those who are or used to be frontline CVI practitioners. The product is a state-of-the-art system where CIWs can document their work, managers can use interactive maps to guide street-level strategy, and directors can run reports to make programming decisions and seek funding—and every detail of the system experience is tailored to the needs and preferences of those actually doing the work. Not only will CVI Empowered help to save lives, but it represents a tool that is built by community, for community, in the truest sense.

OWNERSHIP

A simple but profoundly impactful innovation vis-à-vis CVI Empowered that has resulted from the LA Peacemakers initiative is the way that ownership of the data entered into this new system has come to be structured. Through the collaborative process of formulating agreeable collective terms of use among LAVIC members, a unanimous piece of input articulated by the coalition was the requirement that each organization own the data that it enters into CVI Empowered. Participants in these conversations shared that, historically, most work in CVI involving systematic documentation and data collection at scale has been facilitated through platforms managed by third-party institutions (e.g., universities or private funders) or government entities (e.g., city, county, or state) who have retained data ownership outright or made data export and retrieval prohibitively difficult. Under these circumstances, organizations have effectively retained records of their work only for as long as the contract period with any such third party. Today, many—maybe even most—CVI organizations do not possess detailed, organized, comprehensive historical data on the work that they have done to date. Recognizing the need for LAVIC and the larger CVI profession to begin to rectify this scarcity of authoritative, community-owned data, the LA Peacemakers Initiative has implemented contracts assigning ownership of all data entered into CVI Empowered to the respective organizations

who input that information. Looking to the future, even when this initiative has long since passed, it is imperative that organizations be able to tell the stories of their growth and success in evidence-based ways. The precedent of data ownership beginning with the LA Peacemakers Initiative and CVI Empowered will allow them to do that.

INTEGRATION

As utilized through the LA Peacemakers Initiative, CVI Empowered enables research and evaluation to be integrated within CVI practice and infrastructure in novel ways that provide crucial support to the shared goals of building capacity and reducing community violence. CVI Empowered incorporates regular quantitative (e.g., participant enrollments, incident counts, intervention frequencies) and qualitative (e.g., event descriptions, community

member testimonies, meeting records) data collection as standard elements of individual routine and collective procedure. Organizations can build and effectively leverage repositories of programmatic process and outcome data without extra burden when staff are able to complete regular documentation easily and teams can access clear reports that are generated automatically. This ability reduces the need for over-dependence on external research partners to collect, summarize, and analyze CVI data, thus returning to CBOs the ability to independently evaluate their own programs and, in so doing, validate their own narratives. By using CVI Empowered to integrate research and evaluation capacity into LAVIC, therefore, the LA Peacemakers Initiative uses data and technology innovation to realize greater self-sufficiency and advocacy potential for those working directly to mitigate community violence.



“It’s hard to sit down and do the data when you really want to be on the ground saving lives, changing narratives, changing past trauma, and healing your community, right? But it’s essential to keep track in this work that we do. You’ll always have that data to look back on. It helps us stay grounded and true to our word because we’re not leaving anyone behind.”

Tina Padilla

Founder & Executive Director
Community Warriors 4 Peace



NEXT STEPS



The LA Peacemakers Initiative represents a milestone in the trajectory of CVI's development from an informal practice among altruistic community members, as it once was, to a full-fledged, permanent part of public safety infrastructure, as it one day can and should be.

The initiative is part of a larger movement that is gaining strength and credibility but still faces barriers to sustained advancement. In the current political environment, and amidst the resulting funding insecurity, there is exceptional need to support the growing CVI workforce, bolster existing CVI architecture, and expand the base of commitment to the CVI mission. Critically, the profession faces the question of how to accomplish these goals in ways that are sustainable.

"What does sustainability look like?" wonders Mark Ohrtman, Director of Capacity Building at Urban Peace Institute. "I'm envisioning the space where permanency comes, when this type of work is sewn into the fabric of what community safety is.

"I'm envisioning the space where permanency comes, when this type of work is sewn into the fabric of what community safety is."

Mark Ohrtman

Director of Capacity Building
Urban Peace Institute



But what does that look like, practically? How do we know when that goal is met? It means this is an item that sits on budgets—it is underwritten in local, state, and federal budgets." Ohrtman acknowledges that this is a project for the long term. "We're going to be looking for additional funding to underwrite this not only as real work, but a demonstration piece." Urban Peace Institute Co-Founder, Susan Lee, similarly affirms, "I do think this experiment in LA is a critical way in which we're going to influence not only how the LA system evolves, but how the national CVI conversation evolves."



“This is what it was always about — it was to be community-driven; it was to be a safety system rooted in community, practiced by the community; and the rest of us are just trying to help it along.”

Susan Lee

Co-Founder, Urban Peace Institute

Over the course of the evolution of CVI, there have been and will continue to be major projects that signify inflection points for the field by serving two purposes—effecting significant material change (e.g., building capacity or reducing community violence) and further institutionalizing CVI (i.e., raising awareness, increasing acceptance, and facilitating integration into the public safety system). This initiative does both. It does not, however, fully close the gap between the status quo of over-reliance on traditional public safety strategies and a future in which CVI anchors a community-centered vision of safety. “There are a lot of places where CVI has emerged or sustained itself that haven’t really kept to that promise of being practitioner and community-driven,” reminds Susan Lee, keeping focus on continued opportunities for collective improvement. “We must not forget, in this next phase of the work, that this is what it was always about — it was to be community-driven; it was to be a safety system rooted in community, practiced by the community; and the rest of us are just trying to help it along.”

CVI works—that much is abundantly clear. In fact, it is because CVI has won such hard-fought progress that there is now so much to lose. The collective mandate, today, is not to ask whether CVI works; but how, when, and why it works; and what it looks like for CVI to work better. This has to mean preserving and building upon the gains realized by the LA Peacemakers Initiative, which will require continued allocation of resources through funding, as well as social and political capital. Only then will community safety really mean more than just the absence of violence.

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LA PEACEMAKERS INITIATIVE



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Join us in our efforts to end violence and transform justice systems.

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