

COMMENTARY

Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



To Be Equal:

National Urban League and John Jay College Address Root Causes of Violence and Provide Alternatives to Police Response

"We want to establish a relationship between the police and the community that's not anchored in a warrior mentality, but in a guardian mentality. If you have a warrior mentality, you tend to view everyone in the community as an enemy combatant. If you view everyone in the community as an enemy combatant, that's when tragedy happens. But if you have a guardian mentality, it's a partnership with the community where you're there to promote safety for everyone."

—U.S. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries

More Americans died of gun-related injuries

in 2021, the most recent year for which statistics are available, than in any other year on record. Gun violence claimed the lives of at least 133 people per day, on average.

The violence is continuing apace in 2023, which has seen more than 15,000 lives lost to gun violence already, with more than one mass shooting for every day of the year and at least 370 shot by police.

Economic instability triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise of online hate and malicious misinformation, and tragically lax gun laws have created a deadly crisis of violence that calls for community-based solution-finding. All over the

nation, new ideas and progressive thoughts are flowering from local communities. Toward a New Age of Community Safety, the National Urban League's framework for violence prevention and gun reform, is a compilation of these resources and tools for advocacy that address root causes and bring together communities and like-minded partners.

Release of the report coincided with the Safe & Just Communities Summit, a two-day convening of the National Urban League and John Jay College of Criminal Justice to provide a comprehensive, community centered framework for safe communities that are resourced, just, healthy, and restored.

It is our hope that this framework provides inspiration to the growing movement for change led by communities through partnership between neighbors, with government, and with nongovernmental allies. Through the legacy of the Urban League movement, we are fortified and firm in our belief that through the frustration of these trying times that we can find solutions and strategies for building stronger, safer, and collaborative communities.

During our conversation, Jeffries noted that he is working to several elements of the National Urban League's 21 Pillars for Redefining Public Safety and Restoring Community Trust, specifically bans on chokeholds and no-knock warrants, and requiring officers to intervene when excessive

force is being used.

He also reiterated his support for another National Urban League priority, a ban on assault weapons. As we noted in our new report, there are at least 4 million assault weapons among the 400 million firearms currently in circulation in the United States.

Approximately 400 million firearms are currently in circulation in the U.S., including 4 million assault rifles, with civilian gun ownership is rising in the U.S. The flood of guns into U.S. communities in 2020 led to the largest single-year increase in gun homicides on record. Gun violence reports grew by 30% during the first 12 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, with most states experiencing a spike.

Community-led violence intervention systems are growing in popularity, from the White House to Governor's Offices to municipal governments because they address the root issues of violence and provide alternatives to police response.

When we released the 21 Pillars in 2021, we highlighted the importance of engaging with communities directly, investing in them, and developing strategies for alternative responses to crisis. The framework outlined in Toward a New Age of Community Safety provides greater context, offering regional comparisons of various community-led movements, programs, and projects to serve as inspiration for collaboration and partnership no matter where in the country you are.

Marian Wright Edelman

Founder and President Emerita, Children's Defense Fund



ChildWatch:

So Much Work to Do

Mothers. Grandmothers. Women
We have so much work to do.
So many mothers and infant lives to save.
So many child dreams to realize and hopes to nourish and protect.
Our countries and a common world to change and such long distances to travel—from waging war to waging peace; from sickness and death to health; from doubt to faith in Creator's feminine spirit within
Let some of us—you and I—begin this minute on that journey
To speak for those unable to speak for themselves
To stand with those who cannot stand alone
To gather family and friends to stand with us.
Let us begin this day singing a new song for all our mothers and sisters and brothers and fathers and children around our world who are our own.

An old familiar proverb says, "A man may work from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done." There is no doubt how apt this saying is for many mothers. Mother's Day is often celebrated as an opportunity for families to show mothers they are appreciated through a day of "rest," maybe with a home-cooked breakfast in bed or a dinner out. But mothers know that even in a rare moment when our hands are still, our minds and hearts are never fully at rest. There is always so much work to do.

This is true not only in individual homes and families, but on a national and global scale. Gun violence is just one example. Moms Demand Action has been fighting for common sense changes to our nation's gun laws since the 2012 murders of six educators and twenty first graders in Newtown, Connecticut. So far this year it has seemed clearer than ever that gun violence is an undeniably all-American epidemic. Yet too many elected leaders have remained staunchly unwilling to listen to the groundswell of mothers' voices—joined by fathers,

other women, men, grandparents, and young people across the country—insisting they do something about it. But there is hope we may be reaching a turning point.

This Mother's Day weekend, Moms Demand Action and Everytown for Gun Safety have called for a Mother's Day of Action with rallies across the country on May 13 to demand lawmakers reinstate the bipartisan assault weapons ban. As they say simply: "We are fed up with wondering whether our children will make it home alive." So they are not willing to sit by and idly wait. Many will keep praying fervently for their own children's safety, as mothers and fathers have always done, but they will accompany their prayers and their faith and their concern for children everywhere with work.

This is a chance to sing a new song. I end again with a special prayer this Mother's Day for mothers, grandmothers, and all with a mothering spirit. It is a call to action for all people who are willing to work for the world children deserve.

O God of all time
Yesterday, today, tomorrow, and eternity
Give us courage in our lifetimes
To make war on war
Which leaves behind waifs and widows
Rubble of spirit, home, and community.
Mothers, grandmothers, and all with a mothering spirit
Let us declare and demand:
No more war

No more violence and abuse
No more killing of our young
O God of yesterday, today, tomorrow, and eternity
Our dwelling place in all generations
Give us courage to sow seeds of life and hope for the future
And to fight with all our moral might for justice for every child
Help us to pluck the thorns of despair from our children's lives.
Mothers, grandmothers, and all with a mothering spirit
Let us declare and demand:
No more hunger
No more homelessness
No more poverty
O God of yesterday, every child's history
O God of today, every living child's birthright
O God of tomorrow, every child's inheritance
O God of eternity, every child's hope
Life our voices against the spiritual and cultural pollution
which leave dreamless and purposeless the fruit of our wombs.
Mothers, grandmothers, and all with a mothering spirit
Let us stand together and build a world fit for children
Calling all to serve, to care, and to act to leave no child behind.

—May 12, 2023

People Seeking Asylum Are Heroes; Politicians Who Demonize Them Are Cowards

WASHINGTON (May 11, 2023)—Following is a statement from CASA Executive Director Gustavo Torres, reacting to the Biden administration's plan to replace Title 42 restrictions at the U.S./Mexico border with a new asylum ban.

This announcement is a new low for the Biden administration and, indeed, this country. People move. They move for safety; they move for opportunity. They move because they want to, and sometimes because they have to.

The people who are coming to our border to

seek asylum are just that—people. They want the same thing we all want—a chance at safety, security, and a future without fear. Why can't we have policies that reflect our shared humanity?

Instead of showing leadership and changing the conversation about migration to one of humanity and fairness, President Biden and some Democrats are doubling down on the narrative of fear and embracing exclusion. They're trying to present a sanitized version of the "othering" that President Trump so proudly brandished.

But there is no Trump-lite. There is no humane way to turn away people in danger. Either we understand that we are part of one human race and orient our policies to embrace this fact, or we fail in a deep way.

At CASA we see people seeking asylum as heroes, and the Biden administration and politicians of all parties who want to turn them away as cowards. People seeking asylum are living the values we claim every day. They are striving and seeking. It's not just that they would do anything to protect their families—they are doing everything.

It's the same as people with Temporary Protected Status. Despite the tentative acceptance they are given by U.S. laws, they are building something strong for their families and this country. We should embrace them as people, as friends and neighbors, as our community. We should restore the right to seek asylum, and extend TPS for Cen-

tral America—to reduce the constant fear of deportation that so many of our community members face, so we can focus on building our future together.

With over 149,000 lifetime Latino, immigrant, and working-class members across 46 US states, CASA is the foremost immigrant organization in the mid-Atlantic region and a national leader in supporting immigrant families and ensuring that all individuals have the core support necessary for full participation in society. Now a national immigrant powerhouse, CASA creates change with its powerbuilding model blending human services, community organizing, and advocacy in order to serve the full spectrum of the needs, dreams, and aspirations of members. Visit us at www.wearecasa.org and follow us on Twitter at @CASAforall

How We Can Do More for ALICE in Prince George's County

By Rosie Allen-Herring, President and CEO, United Way of the National Capital Area

A new United Way of the National Capital Area (United Way NCA) report on Prince George's County sheds light on the financial hardship of those who are working yet cannot afford the basics in the communities where they live. Of the 346,127 households in Prince George's, 31% had income below the ALICE Threshold of Financial Survival in 2021.

ALICE, a United Way NCA acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, represents the number of individuals and families working but unable to afford basic necessities, such as food, healthcare, childcare, transportation expenses and more.

While the Federal Poverty Line (FPL) is updated yearly, the Census Bureau determines poverty status using Thresholds dating back to 1963. The antiquated FPL, the fact that ALICE households may not qualify for federal benefits or safety nets, and the increased cost of living over time, all contribute to the grow-

ing number of ALICE households.

To illustrate, a family of four with two parents working full time in two of the most common occupations (retail salesperson and cashier) earning a combined \$58,500 annually could not afford Prince George's Household Survival Budget of \$93,228 in 2021, even with the \$20,800 in assistance through the expanded Child Tax Credit, the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, and the Economic Impact Payments.

ALICE is our district's childcare workers, home health aides and cashiers—those with little or no savings and one emergency from poverty. The gap between wages and the cost of living is a structural economic problem that has worsened since the COVID-19 outbreak. As such, Wednesday, May 17, United Way NCA will host its annual Do More 24 For ALICE.

Do More 24 is a social movement that con-

venes nonprofits, private companies, and people of all ages committed to making a difference in their community. This year during this 24-hour online day of giving, we ask our friends and neighbors to imagine for a moment what life would be like if you were unsure of how you would pay your rent, mortgage, or utility bills next month.

As the region's convener, collaborator, and catalyst, United Way NCA's goal is to create a more equitable society where everyone in our community has fair and equal access to health, education, and economic opportunity. We cannot do this work alone, so we're calling on the community to Do More for ALICE. We know that collectively we can make great strides to reduce ALICE households in our region. When none are ignored, all will thrive. For more information, please visit <http://domore24.org/uwnca>.

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