



AACI Call to Action to Address Murder of Indianapolis Youth

Our children should not be murdered in this city. Our children should not murder each other.

This year alone we have experienced the tragedy of the loss of the potential, talent, and aspirations of 23 young people taken from us before their time.

Their loss reverberates through families, friends, mentors, schools, neighborhoods, and the entire city.

We now must face a sobering reality. In too many instances, the work of guiding our youth to productive adulthood and citizenship challenges the capacity of parents, mentors, teachers, employers, churches, and community organizations, especially when they work alone, and not collaboratively with others concerned about the welfare of our children and community.

Despite a 17% decline for 2023 in overall homicides the death of children under 18 has been rising from 16 youth murder in 2019 and increasing to 23 youth in 2023. This raises a critical question—what is it our community must do to protect the youngest among us?

This is a question for each adult, African American, Caucasian, Latino, Asian as well as the corporate, philanthropic, youth service, faith-based community, and governmental sectors.

We all must ask are we doing enough, even for one child, to create conditions of hope and success for all children. What is being done to eliminate multi-generational poverty that is responsible for some youth engaging in risky behavior such as the drug trade to make money? Why are Black males disproportionately represented in both the perpetrators and the victims of homicides and non-fatal shootings?

Community activists and youth service providers argue that the city's anti-violence efforts may need to be managed with increased attention to young people. While this assertion must be backed with facts and ideas for improvement, we note the unfortunate reality that between 2020 and 2023 a greater number of youth homicides occurred year over year. We think there is an opportunity for the Mayor and the Police Chief to give additional focus to youth homicides.

But we must be part of any solution to problems impacting our community.

In the coming months the African American Coalition of Indianapolis (AACI) will be engaged in discussions with the community and policy makers on policies that can impact the antecedents of community violence including mental health, affordable housing, and food insecurity.

Our specific call to action includes the following:



AFRICAN AMERICAN COALITION OF INDIANAPOLIS – AACI

1. The AACI will look internally to evaluate how our member organizations can better engage on this issue. We will assess how our members can increase the number of African American and others who will serve as mentors, coaches, and tutors.
2. AACI's policy agenda will include a focus on gun violence including ideas to eliminate their negative impact in our community. We join efforts such as the Marion County Youth Violence Prevention Coalition and others calling for responsible gun policies. We will also adapt our advocacy efforts regarding mental health with an increased focus on the mental health of our youth.
3. We call for youth serving organizations, faith-based organizations, apartment property managers, and the city to continue conversations about how to address the issue of violence with a special focus on specific actions to improve the city's community youth violence strategy. Young people, especially those in the highest risk populations for violence must be included in those conversations.
4. We call on the philanthropic and business community to further provide resources for those most directly engaged in direct work with youth, young adults and families who've experienced violence. Support for volunteerism, tutoring, mentoring, access to food and clothing and other interventions we know may have some impact on both poverty and violence alleviation need expanded support. As a partner in the Indianapolis African American Quality of Life Initiative (IAAQLI) we will encourage additional strategies that address these concerns.

No community can thrive if it cannot protect its youth from both homicides and the mental trauma of young people experiencing the violent loss of their family and friends and peers. No community can thrive if young people are afraid and feel they must carry a gun for protection. No community can thrive if it becomes easier for a young person to obtain a gun rather than a computer or a book.

We must all be about the protection and healthy development of our young people. Failing to do so is failing to protect the future.
