

Children's Institute Hosts AG Rob Bonta and the Office of Gun Violence Prevention at a Roundtable in Watts

Children's Institute and local organizations host CA Attorney General Rob Bonta and the Office of Gun Violence Prevention to Discuss Gun Violence in Watts

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, April 19, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Children's Institute (CII), one of the largest organizations in Southern California dedicated to the mental, educational, and financial health of children and families in Southern California, was proud to host a roundtable discussion on the prevention of gun violence in the Watts neighborhood on Tuesday. Convened by California Attorney General [Rob Bonta](#) and the Department of Justice's Office of Gun Violence Prevention, the event, held at Children's Institute's Watts Campus, brought together community leaders, advocates, and experts to address how to most effectively address a worrying rise in gun violence in the neighborhood and surrounding areas.

Monica Dedhia, Director of Community Health at the Children's Institute, joined Attorney General Bonta, Director of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention Ari Freilich, Benjamin Nate, also from the Office of Gun Violence Prevention, Rock Lester of Time Done, and Fernando Rejon of the Urban Peace Institute. In front of an audience of around 40 community leaders, concerned parents, and others impacted by violence in the Watts neighborhood, where the topics of sustainability and prevention were never far from the participants' minds.

"We tend to be reactive to gun violence - not just in our actions, such as focusing on law enforcement after the fact, but also in our funding priorities, where we allocate reliable financial support for punishment, while prevention relies too much on one-off grants and swings in the political mood and budget priorities. We agree with the AG that empowering survivors is critical and so we urge policymakers to address gun violence as a public health issue. It is the only way to heal the generational trauma created by gun violence in South LA - especially among children. We cannot prevent gun violence & build healthy communities without investment in healing and mitigating toxic stress."

Gun violence has an especially pernicious impact on children. Not only are gunshot wounds the leading cause of death for children in the United States, but we now understand as part of the growing movement around Adverse Childhood Experiences that toxic stress created by exposure to gun violence and its effects can dramatically raise the risk of children developing mental and physical health problems later in life, leading to increased involvement in the justice system,

decreased earning potential, and increased risks of long term illnesses such as Alzheimer's and heart disease.

Targeted and sustained interventions by trusted community members can help prevent gun violence and tend to the mental and physical health of those impacted by it, but too often funding for violence prevention is through one-off grants and donations, leading to a stop-start approach that doesn't foster trust or awareness in the communities where interventions are most needed.

Both the Children's Institute and the [Watts Gang Task Force](#) have built that trust in Watts after putting in the hard work of investing time and resources in the community. Donny Joubert, the president of the Watts Gang Task Force, lived through the Watts uprising and has decades of experience in the community as a dedicated activist and leader.

"We have boots on the ground in Watts and South LA who are dedicated to creating and maintaining peace in the community. They often do this without any committed compensation, and what compensation does come is unpredictable. What is predictable is the rise in gun and gang violence that happens when an already under-resourced community is deprived of access to mental health resources for traumatized families," said Joubert.

In response to the need for continued community engagement, the Children's Institute is hosting their second annual "Healing from Gun Violence" event providing education on the impact of Gun Violence and activities that promote healing on June 1, 2024 at 10:00am on their Watts Campus. More information can be found by visiting: shorturl.at/bAFX3

The Children's Institute extends its gratitude to Attorney General Rob Bonta, the Office of Gun Violence Prevention, and all participants for their commitment to addressing gun violence and creating safer neighborhoods for all residents. Together, we stand united in our mission to protect the well-being and futures of our children.

For more information about the Children's Institute, please go to childrensinstitute.org.

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