

Accepting Responsibility to Reform Our Own Communities

Contributed by NOI New Orleans Administrator
Wednesday, 11 February 2009
Last Updated Sunday, 10 May 2009

Inspired by the theme of Saviours’ Day 2009 and the previous work of Brother Dennis Muhammad with the Peace Keepers, members of Muhammad Mosque organized a community event asking citizens of New Orleans to accept the responsibility to reform. After the death of a two year old child who was murdered by his very own father, I reflected heavily on the theme of Saviours’ Day. I called Brother Dennis and we talked more about the condition of our community and the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan’s instruction to us to get more involved in changing the current climate of our neighborhoods. All of this led to me writing an editorial that was printed in the local newspaper, which caught the attention of many and caused some controversy. In the editorial I stressed the need for our community, especially black males to accept the responsibility to produce the change we so badly desire,” stated Brother Willie Muhammad. As a result of the editorial Brother Willie was invited to appear on several local television and radio shows to discuss the content of the letter. “In the midst of the attention the letter received, we began planning a community meeting that would help those who were interested in working to produce the change to get involved, he continued.

Invitations were sent out to numerous community service providers and grassroots organizations that have a history of working in the city. Nearly all of those who were invited agreed to participate. The groups provided such services as mentorship programs, HIV/STD awareness, anti –violence/anti-police brutality initiatives, youth organizations and many more. Each community service provider/grassroots organization was asked to setup a table that provided information about the kind of work they are doing in the community. Then an invitation was extended to the greater community to come out and learn about each community service provider and then get involved. “We used the example of the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan during the historic Million Man March, when he encouraged all of the two million plus men to get involved with some organization,” stated Brother Willie Muhammad. The community came out and many signed up to help one of the community service providers by either, volunteering their time, becoming a member or making a financial contribution. The second portion of the program focused on the Street Peace Keepers initiative which was presented by Brother Dennis Muhammad. A recent newspaper article titled, “New Orleans breeds bold killers: half of murders occur in daytime,” showed that many of the murders in New Orleans have been committed during the hours of 8-6pm. The article also listed seven areas where the majority of the murders in the city have taken place. A call was put out to the men in the community to make an initial commitment to walking through each area for one hour referred to by the event organizers as the Hour of Power - once a week. Those in attendance listened attentively as Brother Dennis talked about the challenges faced by previous generations during civil rights in comparison to the challenged faced by this current generation. “When those of the civil rights area were faced with the challenge of changing the condition of segregation, they met that challenge with courage and accepted the responsibility even under the most violent circumstances.

RECENT EVENTS IN RELATION TO STORY

2/14/09 - Peace Keepers came out to participate in the first Hour of Power since the initial community meeting. Participants gathered together and walked through the Iberville Housing Development passing out information about employment, HIV/STD awareness pamphlets, Final Call Newspapers and other helpful resources.

While walking through the housing development members of the Peace Keepers were able to prevent a fight that was about to take place between some of the youth in the housing development.

3/7/09 - Peace Keepers hit the Westbank. We walked down Monroe Street and then the formerly Fischer Housing Development. Like in many of the other areas we visited, we were well accepted by the community. We passed out fliers for the FREE basic electrical wiring training started by one of the FOI who participates in the weekly Hour of Power. The reception has been overwhelming. One of the youth who were about to participate in fight in the Iberville Housing development has enrolled in the electrical training programs as a result of one of the brothers taking him under his wing.

The brothers gathered at the historic Criage Cultural Center. Big thanks to the Criage brothers.

3/21/09 - The Peace Keepers returned back to the Iberville Housing Development. Brother Scott encountered a couple who were experiencing some real challenges to their marriage. We were able to help connect them to a service thanks to one of the Peace Keepers who knew of a local pastor who provides marital counseling. I was notified on yesterday that their first appointment has been scheduled.

Also while in the Iberville passing out one of the many fliers we all had. A young brother approached one of the Peace Keepers and was amazed to hear that there was an electrical wiring class that was FREE and all of the tools would be provided for FREE also. The young brother responded, "Man, yall must really love us huh?"

4/4/09 - The Peace Keepers walked through what is considered one of these "hottest" areas in the Lower 9th ward post-Katrina. This area was Lazard and St. Claude. Robert Glenn Jr. and Wesley Mc Clendon led the Peace Keepers to many of the areas in that vicinity where much of the drug dealing takes place and where some of the recent murders in the city have taken place. Like normally, the Peace Keepers were well received by the community and the effort was commended.

Wesley introduced us to a local barber who said he is willing to gather some of the brothers in the neighborhood in his shop so they can hear from us. We also had the opportunity to stop and show our support to a community event that was put on by Ann Duplesiss.

We would also like to update you all on some of the previous work that has been done. Harold Clark informed us that the couple in the Iberville have already completed one marital counseling session. Also the young brother who we helped to prevent from fighting attended the first electrical training class and is now also employed by one of the Peace Keepers. His mother sent a text message thanking Brother Patrick for helping her son to change his life.

To view a few images of the February 7 community meeting and the first Hour of Power initiative you can do so by pressing the ctrl button on your computer and click on the following link:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/crok333/TremeCommunityOutreachDay?feat=email>

<http://picasaweb.google.com/crok333/IbervilleProjects21409?feat=email#>

4/11/09 - This week we visited two areas in the 17th ward -Hollygrove and Pigeon Town. Brother Tilman brought us to the scene of the recent shooting in that area. Bullet holes that were left in two of the adjacent houses on the block. From there we walked through the neighborhood interacting with members of the community and offering our help. We stopped talked to two elderly women sitting on a porch. The grandson of one of the women was recently shot. We informed her about the purpose and goals of the 1 Hour of Power Initiative and offered to her whatever services we had to offer. She immediately contacted her daughter who is the mother of the young man who was shot and asked me to talk with her. The pain of the young woman could easily be heard through the phone. She told me that she was in great need of counseling, because she saw her son shot. We are in the process of connecting her with the services she needs. We will keep each of you posted

As a follow up to our walk through Pension Town, Brother Tilman held a very successful community meeting on Tuesday at a school in the neighborhood. He has also agreed to organize a group of men from that area to do their own 1 Hour of Power community walks in that community.

4/18/09 - The Peace Keepers visited the area which was the scene of the murder of the 15 year old girl was was shot while standing on the corner of Washington and Liberty. The people of the community were happy to see us. We encountered some residents of an apartment complex that is not being maintained. We took down the name of the ownership of the apartment complex and plan on contacting them to discuss why the apartment units have been neglected.

Members of the Peace Keepers also gave their personal contact information to mothers who needed men to talk to their young sons. Many of the young brothers who passers by may see standing on the corner and out of fear lock their car doors-warmly recieved the Peace Keepers.

4/25/09 - The Peace Keepers revisited the Calliope Housing Development. The Peace Keepers were warmly recieved by the residents. Nearly all of the residents that we encountered young and old were happy to see us come to their neighborhood offering help. One brother committed to participate in future 1 Hour of Power outreaches. We collected the contact information of residents who expressed a desire to attain their GED. We also talked to a mother whose son was harassed by members of the NOPD.

During the week information about GED preparation classes were given to those residents we met and a letter is currently being drafted that will be sent to NOPD top brass. As the brothers gathered to close out the hour outreach, they were approached by one of the young brothers who hangs in the Calliope. He wanted to express to the brothers how much he and the other young soldiers in the housing developement really admired and respected the brothers. "Man, I know we are out here doing our thing. We are not saying it is right. But I wanted to let you brothers know that each of us back here respect yall- for real," stated the young brother.

We would like to also inform you that we have referred the mother who saw her son shot to a local counselor who has agreed to donate one day out of his work week to provide free services counseling services to those we meet who need help. The counselor has also agreed to come out on Saturday's where his schedule permits.

Areas participants in the 1 Hour Power have visited thus far:

1 - Iberville Housing Developement 2 - Calliope Housing Development

3 - MLK/Simon Bolivar are in Central City 4 - Algiers on the Westbank

5 - Returned back to Iberville Housing Development

6 - Lower 9th ward St. Claude and Lazard

7 - 17th Ward (Hollygrove and Pigeon Town Areas)

8 - Central City (Walked down Washington Ave. toward Barone)

9 - Calliope Housing Development