

NEWS

Youth demand action on gun violence

Want tougher gun control laws

By La Risa Lynch

A day before the U.S. Supreme court prepares to hear arguments on the constitutionality of the city's handgun ban, a national teen gun survey shows that half of all Black youths know someone impacted by gun violence.

"We teens are fed up with gun violence and are tired of seeing our peers' futures cut short," said Eddie Bland, 18, a member of Uhhich Children's Advantage Network, (UCAN) which commissioned the annual Teen Gun Survey, now in its tenth year.

Youth leaders from UCAN presented the survey's results during a press conference last Monday at the organization's administrative offices, 3737 N. Mozart. UCAN is a north side social service agency serving at-risk youths.

The survey, conducted over a two-month period in the spring of 2009, revealed that one in four teens knows someone who has been shot and one in three teens fears being shot.

The survey also revealed one in three teens could easily access guns if they wanted to while 12 percent

"Too often young people are turning to gun violence to protect themselves," Long said.

Gun violence is not just an urban problem, contends Chase Larkin, of south suburban Dolton, nor is it an issue of class. Larkin noted that his college-bound friend, whose father was a sheriff of Country Club Hills, was gunned down.

"How could someone like him be shot and killed? Are any of us safe?," asked the 20-year-old South Suburban College student.

Pleas for tougher gun control have not gone unheeded by local

holes provide easy access to guns because no background checks are required, which puts guns in the hands of people on terrorist watch lists, with felonies and with mental disorders, he said.

With 500 Chicago Public School students, being victims of gun violence last year, Quigley urged his "colleagues to weigh the extraordinary influence of the extremists on the gun issue versus the fear that our students live with everyday."

Quigley filed an amicus brief with the U.S. Supreme Court urging Chicago's handgun ban to



MONICA SANDERS, 18, speaks at a press conference about the results of a teen gun survey that reveals one in three teens said they can get their hands on a gun if they want.



STATE SENATOR TROTTER and Congressman Mike Quigley discuss legislative efforts they are undertaking to advocate stricter gun laws.

of teens say they know at least one student from their school that was killed by gun violence in the past year. More than 600 youths across the country were questioned for the survey.

UCAN youths hope the survey highlights the need for government officials to craft tougher gun laws.

But Fred Long, a UCAN youth leadership specialist, noted that gun violence is cyclical. He said many victims of gun violence become perpetrators of gun violence. A similar situation happened with a UCAN youth member, who now sits in jail on a gun charge, he said.

politicians. Congressman Mike Quigley (D-5) and State Senator Donne E. Trotter (D-17) both attended the conference and stated they have collaborated to restrict access to guns.

Quigley however noted that Congress has abdicated its duties on gun legislation. He said Congress has refused to renew the assault weapons ban. Congress, he added, has succumbed to the extremists and is "afraid to take action on any reasonable ... gun control."

The federal government should close gun show loopholes, which Quigley said are like the "grand canyon" of illegal purchases. Loop-

stand.

Trotter said it was distressing to hear kids say they can get their hands on guns anytime they want.

Bakewell, other Black media leaders address

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gaged in behind the scenes warfare with those responsible for the spending.

Congressional subcommittee members grilled the Director of the Census Bureau and executives from advertising agencies in charge of the bureau's media buys for Census 2010. They included Dr. Robert Groves, Director of the United States Census Bureau, Jeff Tarakajian, executive vice president of advertising agency DRAFTFCB, Robbyn Ennis, Senior Associate Media Director for Black-owned advertising agency GlobalHue, which facilitated advertising buys for all African-American media.

Chaffetz began the hearing by scolding the Census director for failing to provide requested information to Congress.

"I am terribly disappointed in the Census on their inability and unwillingness to cooperate on giving us details that we have been asking for repeatedly," Chaffetz said. "And I hold Director Groves personally account-



STATE SENATOR Donne E. Trotter discuss bills pending in the state legislature to license vendors and individual gun sellers with the State Police Department to prevent illegal gun sales.

"We know that we are not manufacturing guns here in the city of Chicago, so they have to come from somewhere. Where they are coming from is illegal sellers," Trotter said.

The General Assembly is working on a bill requiring that anyone who sells handguns must be licensed by the Illinois State Police. Also, anyone found guilty of defacing a gun's serial numbers could face three to seven years in prison.

"Some of us are listening to what you are saying," Trotter said.

When asked about what could be done to reduce gun violence, the teens responded that more male mentoring programs are needed.

"We want to be helped," said Bland, who is involved in UCAN's Project Visible Man program, a male mentoring program.

Monica Sanders, 18, a Best Practice High School student, added that programs should not overlook females who are both victims and perpetrators of gun violence. Sanders lost a 17-year-old female friend to gun violence when a 15-year-old female student shot her to death.

"Our efforts to stop violence must include everyone," Sanders said.

The findings of UCAN's Teen Gun Survey can be found at www.ucan.chicago.org.

able for his unresponsiveness, in a repeated nature. I think it's terribly disrespectful and unacceptable."

He later called the Census' actions "reprehensible".

Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) said that she was concerned about much of the information



Congressman Lacy Clay

that she was receiving about media buyers threatening Black media into giving away placements in exchange for their allotted advertising funding.

"It appears that our message of the undercount is not being respected," she said.

Waters also shared that she believes that the money is not enough to be effective.

"The money does not appear to match the need," she said.

Groves defended the amounts used to purchase media ads saying they were based on statistical and historic data.



Cong. Maxine Waters

"I can honestly say that the program was set up in an objective manner guided by data on what audiences needed given their historical behavior," Groves said in response to the perceived unfairness in media buys with ethnic media outlets.