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Metropolitan Peace Academy Graduates More Than 70 Community Violence Intervention Workers and Management Fellows

CHICAGO, June 18, 2025 – Metropolitan Peace Initiatives (MPI) and Communities Partnering 4 Peace (CP4P) celebrated the newest class of Chicago Community Violence Intervention (CVI) professionals and leadership fellows from the Metropolitan Peace Academy (MPA).

The MPA is the Metropolitan Peace Initiatives' premier multi-disciplinary training program, designed to streamline and strengthen the field of CVI. The Academy provides intensive and robust gun violence prevention training for street outreach workers, case managers, victim advocates, and trauma recovery specialists, in addition to community trainings for Chicago residents and police officers.

Among the more than 70 graduates was the inaugural class of the Management and Supervision Fellowship. The program supports mid-level managers working in the CVI field who are seeking to further their careers in nonprofit and violence prevention leadership.

"We're living in an unprecedented time, and it is important for us to keep our hands out and keep our eyes on the prize of what we're trying to get accomplished, and not be distracted by things you can't control," said MPI Executive Director Vaughn Bryant. "What you can control is getting up every day with purpose and serving your community and making your community better, no matter what the circumstances are around us".

The first keynote speaker was **Avik Das**, Executive Director of the Justice Advisory Council under Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. Das spoke on the importance of CVI and the unique position the graduates are in to help keep their communities safe.

"[My department isn't] going to be able to reach in spaces [with] the heart, the wisdom, and the commitment that is shared by this cohort," Das said. "We must pour into relationships closest to where the healing needs to be, where the resources need to go. And that can't happen in cages, with handcuffs, or court orders. We need to lead with love in community spaces rocked by trauma."

Necole Muhammad served as the second keynote speaker of the evening. Muhammad is the founder of Chicago CRED's Women's Center, as well as a licensed clinical social worker and public health specialist with more than 30 years of experience.

"The work you've chosen is sacred and intentional; it's dangerous but it's necessary," Muhammad said to the graduates. "You step into your chosen fields with life experience that no textbook could ever teach. You came carrying your own pain and your own power."

To date, over 600 individuals have graduated from the MPA.

About MPI

Metropolitan Peace Initiatives (MPI), a division of Metropolitan Family Services, convenes Communities Partnering 4 Peace (CP4P), a coalition of 15 community-based organizations focused on reducing gun violence in 28 of Chicago's highest-risk neighborhoods. For more information, visit www.MetropolitanPeaceInitiatives.org.

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