

Mayor Rahm Emanuel's Public Safety Address

(as prepared for delivery on September 22, 2016 at Malcolm X College)

I want to thank you for coming this evening. I especially want to thank Chancellor Hyman and Malcolm X College for hosting us.

Today, I want to have a conversation with the people of Chicago about an issue that weighs heavily on all of us.

Gun violence in Chicago is unacceptable.

It threatens everything we have done together and all of the progress we have made in other areas. It is pulling us apart at the very moment when our city needs to come together.

When a six year-old girl playing on her porch with her family is shot, or the son of a police officer home from college on summer break is murdered on his front stoop, or an anti-violence activist is gunned down while playing video games at his friend's house, or an Army veteran who mentors at-risk youth at the YMCA is killed in his car at night, our hearts are torn.

For all the things that make Chicago great, for all the things that make us proud to call ourselves Chicagoans, the violence that is happening corrodes our core. It is not the Chicago we know and love.

Just over two years ago, shootings and murders in Chicago were on a steady, downward slide. They were reduced to a level our city had not seen since 1965.

Today, that hopeful trend has been reversed.

As big a problem as gun violence is for Chicago, it is not beyond our ability to solve. Ending this string of tragedies is our top priority as a city.

We are infusing our police department with the manpower, technology and training to meet this challenge head on.

But while we are going to add significant resources, nothing will match the resource of an officer knowing that the neighborhood they work in supports the work they do.

Fighting crime requires a partnership between the police and the community. And we all know that this partnership has been tested in Chicago. It is a problem that has festered in this city for decades. The shooting of Laquan McDonald brought it to the breaking point.

I know, and Superintendent Johnson and his team know, that we will not succeed in turning back the rising tide of violence without changing and rebuilding critical relationships with the community, especially communities of color.

Under Superintendent Johnson's leadership, our police department is on a path to earn the respect of every community in the City of Chicago.

Over the past months, Chicago has been making steady progress on our commitment to transparency and accountability.

Every officer will have a body camera by next year, and every officer has already been trained and equipped with a Taser.

The police department created a new training requirement that places officers in live scenarios that help prepare them to calm volatile situations.

We are reforming the way police respond to individuals with mental illness to treat it as a health concern, not a criminal concern.

We have new protocols in place for the timely release of police videos.

We are in the process of replacing the independent agency that investigates police misconduct with a new organization with the tools to ensure real accountability when wrongdoing occurs.

We are fully committed to adopting a citizen oversight board that will provide a strong and active voice for the community.

We as a city will not waver until trust has been restored and the breach between our police and residents has been mended, because doing so is essential to public safety.

But I want to be frank. We all know from our own experiences in our own lives that adopting change is hard. It is especially hard when that change is significant.

While these changes are being implemented we are simultaneously asking our officers to serve in very perilous situations with a lot of illegal guns and emboldened gangs on the streets.

They need our support. And they know they need to earn the public's trust.

The overwhelming number of police officers in Chicago are doing good work under difficult conditions. They put their lives on the line every day in situations none of us can fully comprehend or appreciate.

When I talk to Chicagoans who live in our most violence-prone neighborhoods, they do not hate the police. In fact, they tell me they want more cops and fewer gangs.

They do not want more officers in cars, just driving through their communities. They want officers on the beat in their neighborhoods.

There are too many senior citizens and good residents in Chicago who are sick and tired of having to walk several blocks out of their way when they leave their homes just to avoid the gangs and drug dealers on the street corner.

In too many communities parents cannot even let their children play outside for fear of a stray bullet. They have to teach their children how to react when they hear the all-too-common sound of gunfire.

They want more police on the street who know and respect the residents of their neighborhoods.

As I have said before, and I want to repeat today: respect is a two-way street.

There can be no permission slip for people taunting police officers trying to solve a crime in their community. And there can be no pass for officers belittling a citizen who has turned to them for help. Both of which we have seen in recent videos.

Every one of us has a role to play in rebuilding the vital partnership between our police and the community. We all have to hold ourselves, and each other, to a higher standard.

So today I am calling on all Chicagoans to join in a comprehensive plan to confront gun violence.

No matter who you are, what your background is, where you live in Chicago, this fight belongs to all of us.

Now there are three paths we must take to confront this challenge. There is enforcement, there is investment, and there is prevention. And each is dependent on the others.

On the enforcement side, we need more police officers on the streets of our neighborhoods.

Superintendent Johnson knows what he needs for the police department to be successful. He has a strategy for fighting the recent upsurge in gang and gun violence which is integrated into our broader strategy for public safety. And a component of that strategy includes more officers on the streets.

That is why my budget will contain the first installment of a two-year plan to hire 500 more police officers. These officers will be assigned directly to the streets of our communities, to work with their residents in a partnership against violence.

We are also making a significant investment in our training academy and adding nearly 100 new field training officers.

To make sure that our beat officers have the oversight and direction they need, Superintendent Johnson will be promoting dozens of new sergeants from among his current officers. These new sergeants know the streets. Their experience and leadership will help guide our officers on the beat, whether they are rookies or veterans.

But our additional personnel will not be limited to beat officers. As the Superintendent announced just yesterday, over the next two years we will also hire 200 more detectives to work in our violent crime and homicide units.

As we hire and promote new officers, sergeants, lieutenants and detectives we will be guided by the recognition that our police department needs to reflect the communities it serves.

Even with these new resources, our police department cannot tackle this law enforcement challenge alone. We need to enhance our partnership with federal agencies that help us fight crime including the US Attorney, FBI, DEA, ATF, and US Marshals.

So as I ask our police department to step up and do more, I ask our federal partners to do the same.

To help our police officers do their jobs better, we are also going to invest in state-of-the-art technology.

In addition to body cameras and Tasers for every officer, we are funding the placement of new gunshot-tracing cameras in our most violent police districts. These cameras will help our officers respond more quickly to shootings while providing evidence to help identify and convict violent offenders.

And when these shooters are apprehended and convicted, we are going to make sure they start serving the time that equals their crime.

Every one of us was sickened by the recent murder of Nykea Aldridge while she pushed a baby carriage down the street to register her children at Dulles Elementary School, happily doing what a parent does in the closing days of summer.

What makes it even worse is that her murder might have been prevented if the alleged perpetrators had been given the sentences they deserve for prior crimes.

The two brothers charged with Nykea's murder were both repeat violent offenders out on parole. One was released just two weeks before Nykea was shot. The other

brother, convicted of multiple gun offenses, was sentenced to only six years on his most recent conviction, when he was eligible for up to 14.

We need to stop the revolving door for repeat violent offenders.

These violent offenders must know that their punishment will match the seriousness of the crimes they have committed, and the value and sanctity of the lives they have taken.

Let me remind you what one admitted gangbanger said in 2012 to a reporter. This is what the gangbanger said: that his gun possession arrest was a joke. Gangbangers know how to manipulate the criminal justice system, and they know its weaknesses first-hand.

Our criminal justice system is fractured, and it is undermining Chicago's neighborhoods.

Earlier this year the Illinois General Assembly passed and the Governor signed a law that reduced penalties for low-level drug offenses. It is similar to an ordinance we passed here in Chicago in 2012. This law is an important step in shrinking the pipeline into the criminal justice system for minor offenses, but that was only half the job.

Tougher penalties for repeat violent offenders and stronger regulation of gun dealers represent the other half.

Superintendent Johnson and I have made it our mission to work for passing a bill by Senators Kwame Raoul and Tony Munoz, and Representatives Mike Zalewski and Elgie Sims, that will encourage judges to ensure repeat gun offenders receive sentences at the high end of the sentencing ranges. I have already talked to leadership in Springfield to let them know this bill is a top priority for the City of Chicago.

Making sure that the most dangerous offenders receive appropriate sentences is an important step, but we also must do more to keep guns out of the wrong hands in the first place.

I join President Obama and the vast majority of Chicagoans who are tired of waiting for Washington to get serious about gun violence. This Congress is so out-of-step that it will not even deny the sale of guns to suspected terrorists on the No-Fly List.

Since Congress will not act to set a national standard, Chicago needs Springfield to step up.

Representative Willis has introduced a bill, modeled after a Chicago law, to hold gun stores accountable for flooding our streets with weapons.

Thousands of guns recovered by the Chicago Police Department can be traced back to just a handful of stores. And some of these stores continue to sell to people who used those guns in previous crimes.

This proposed new state licensing law for gun stores will allow local law enforcement to inspect business records, require safety measures, and train store employees to detect traffickers.

Superintendent Johnson and I will work to pass this new law in Springfield, and I am calling on other Illinoisans to join us. Our residents and police are demanding tougher gun laws and tougher sentences. We need Springfield to be part of the solution and not just mimic Washington.

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The second piece of this anti-crime blueprint is investing in communities and providing job opportunities to all those who need them. Because the old adage is true; the best anti-crime program is a job.

It is no accident that we are meeting this evening at Malcolm X Community College.

This completely new campus, which we opened earlier this year, created nearly 1,000 new jobs when it was built.

More important, it is providing its students with a pathway to a successful career in the healthcare field.

But it is not just here at Malcolm X. At Olive Harvey College on the Far South Side, thousands of Chicagoans are pursuing the knowledge and skills for good-paying jobs in transportation, distribution and logistics. And we are building a new campus there to open next year.

And we're not giving up on those young people who are not going to college. We held a job fair right here yesterday. I attended, along with 500 young people who are looking for a shot at a job that will put them on the path to success.

It is the fourth job fair like it we have held in the past 13 months.

This is part of a partnership we launched last year with Howard Schultz of Starbucks called the 100,000 Opportunities Initiative. The idea is to help young people who are not in school and do not have a job. To date, we have brought such young people together with more than 50 employers, resulting in more than 2,000 new jobs.

It is a good start, but we need to do more. That is why we are working closely with civic leaders, foundations, and funders like Arne Duncan and the Emerson Collective

to develop a comprehensive strategy for helping our city's young people who are not in school and lack a job.

Our summer jobs program, One Summer Chicago, served more than 31,000 young people this past year.

We specifically targeted jobs and services for 1,000 young people who are not in school. And next summer we are going to double that.

We need to build more opportunity in the neighborhoods where people live, which is why we established the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund.

By the beginning of next year, we will have nearly \$8 million dollars in that fund; money we can invest in the neighborhoods to leverage new small businesses, create new jobs, and develop new retail corridors.

We are seeing promising returns on neighborhood investments in Austin, in Bronzeville, in Pullman and Englewood. The Obama Presidential Library we fought for promises a huge economic dividend for the entire South Side; an appropriate legacy for Chicago's favorite son.

Working community-by-community, block-by-block, we are going to expand opportunity and hope in every neighborhood in Chicago.

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The final part of this blueprint is, perhaps, the most important.

Many of the gun crimes in our city are being committed by young men with gang affiliations, and many of the victims of gun violence in our city are young men with gang affiliations.

To have any chance of stopping them from killing each other, and innocent bystanders, we have to stop them from giving up on themselves and their futures.

In my second Inaugural Address I talked about these young men, and the need for Chicagoans to join together to provide them with alternatives to guns and gangs. As I said then:

“When young men join gangs in search of praise, we can and must do better.

When young men turn to lives of crime for hope, we can and must do better.

When prison is the place we send boys to become men, we can and must do better.”

Many of these young men are dropouts. They do not have jobs. They do not have hope. They do not see a future.

And many of them do not have positive role models in their lives.

And the danger we face today is that the gangs are serving as the role models, the mentors, and the families for these young men.

When President Obama announced the My Brother's Keeper initiative, which was inspired by the organization Becoming a Man here in Chicago, he said, "We need to give more young Americans the support they need to make good choices, and to be resilient, and to overcome obstacles, and achieve their dreams."

I have seen firsthand that when we provide an alternative to the life of guns and gangs, our young people will choose that positive alternative.

We owe them that choice.

As one person in a neighborhood meeting said to me, "Character still counts." And I believe that.

So today I am calling on every Chicagoan to help. Police officers and emergency room surgeons are not the only ones whose job it is to save young lives. To save a young person's life, you have to be part of it.

As the University of Chicago has reported, there are roughly 7,200 young men in the 8th, 9th, and 10th grades in CPS schools in the 20 most crime-plagued neighborhoods. They are on the doorstep of adulthood, and they are among the most at-risk of becoming crime victims or perpetrators.

We need to provide each of these young people with a moral education and a purpose, so the decisions they make today are ones they can look back on proudly.

These young men too often miss school and are failing their classes. In many cases, they already have faced serious school discipline or encountered the criminal justice system.

Today, we are serving only a third of these young men through proven mentoring programs like Becoming a Man – or BAM.

We've seen a 50 percent reduction in arrests for violent crime among BAM students. Let me repeat that: Young men who participate in the BAM program are only half as likely to get caught up in violence. And they are 20 percent more likely to graduate from high school on time.

That is why I am committing today to providing universal mentoring to these 7,200 young men.

And this initiative is not just for a year. It will be a sustained effort.

We will start by investing \$36 million dollars over the next three years to expand mentoring programs. The City of Chicago will provide half of the funding while corporations, philanthropies and individual donors will provide the other half.

We are half way to our private-sector goal thanks to generous support from Exelon, Peoples Gas, Bank of America, Get in Chicago, and from Jimmy John Liautaud.

I want to thank all of these contributors for stepping up for Chicago's future.

Our mentorship efforts will not be limited to BAM. We want to develop and support other initiatives to keep vulnerable young men away from gangs and guns. And by 2018, we will also expand the successfully Working on Womanhood program, or WOW, by one-third.

We are going to be recruiting men and women from across Chicago to participate in these mentoring programs. And we are going to call on the corporate community to help by encouraging their employees to become mentors, themselves.

This will be an opportunity for individuals of good will and compassion to help change the course of a young person's life and the future course of our city. I am confident Chicago will answer the call. If we want every boy to become a man, we need every adult to become a mentor.

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Confronting gun violence and its underlying causes is not easy. It cannot be done in a week.

It will take a commitment from every member of the family we call Chicago.

To reverse the rising tide of violence, we need to provide hope instead of desperation and caring adults instead of gang affiliation.

We need to strengthen policing, prevention, penalties, and parenting.

And we need to bridge the divide between the community and those sworn to protect them.

I say this knowing with all confidence that we can do this.

Even in challenging times, Chicagoans continue to do the big and bold things that have defined us for nearly two centuries.

Earlier this week we learned that Chicago's students achieved record-high ACT scores. That is on top of setting new records for high school graduation, college acceptance, math and reading achievement in 4th and 8th grades, while earning over \$1.1 billion dollars in college scholarships.

I say that because, not long ago, our schools were failing our students and failing Chicago.

But we came together as a city and put our shoulder to the wheel. And now our kids are in a better place for the lives that are in front of them.

When we say Chicago is a city that works, that is what we mean. And that is why I am confident we can solve the challenge of violence.

When we work together, talk together, pray together and act together, as a united city, there is nothing we cannot do.

It will not be easy. Real and lasting change never is.

But across our city, even in the most violence-plagued neighborhoods, I have met brave and resourceful residents who are committed to making a difference in their communities. They should be our inspiration. They should be our North Stars.

They are people like Mother Josephine Wade and her son, Victor Love. Mother Wade uses her restaurant to hire teens from the community, providing them with both jobs and mentoring. Victor is out trying to disrupt violence before it happens, and he founded an organization to connect children with foster parents.

They are young people like Avery Sterling, a young man who grew up in Englewood believing he had no future and no one cared. A few years ago, he started working with a mentor at Children's Home and Aid. And with the guidance of that mentor, he got a job in the One Summer Chicago program. I worked alongside with Avery to paint houses in Englewood, and now he's mentoring other young men -- helping them plan for their futures and make the right choices like he has.

They are people like Tamar Manasseh (te-MAR muh-NASA), who, after being sick and tired of all the gun violence in Englewood, founded Mothers Against Senseless Killings —an army of women, and men, who are reclaiming their neighborhood block by block. Now the movement she started has gone viral and is moving to other neighborhoods and even expanding to other parts of the country.

And there is Arshell Dennis, Jr., a Chicago Police Officer who, after tragically losing his beloved, 19 year-old son, Arshell III, to gun violence, still found the courage and

the strength to put back on his uniform and badge and serve and protect the people of Chicago with dignity, with integrity and with professionalism.

These are Chicago's heroes. They are not alone. All over this city I encounter men, women and young people from all walks of life who are committed to a safer Chicago.

Instead of wringing their hands about crime and violence, they are lending a hand where it is needed. All of us must follow their example.

We must reach out to children and provide them with role models.

We must provide a life-changing job for a teenager, ex-offender, or ex-drug user.

We must invest in troubled communities, rather than driving around them.

We must support our police officers and help them do their difficult work.

At the end of the day, we will be judged by one, simple question: Can a mother in any neighborhood in Chicago send her children outside to play with peace of mind that they are safe?

The city of Chicago is our home. The people of Chicago are our family.

Those of us who live in Chicago, work in Chicago, send our children to school in Chicago, we all have a stake in the future of Chicago.

I pledge my full commitment to this task and humbly ask you for your help.

Now let's get to work. God Bless the City of Chicago.

Thank you.