

University of Chicago Community Violence Intervention Leadership Academy Hosts First Cohort of Leaders from 21 Cities Across America

Community leaders begin six-month leadership and management training program designed to equip participants with tools to advance the CVI field and transform communities.

CHICAGO, IL – Today, the Community Violence Intervention Leadership Academy (CVILA) welcomed its first cohort of community violence intervention (CVI) leaders from 21 cities across America. CVILA is a first-of-its-kind management and leadership training initiative designed to provide senior and executive CVI leaders working in communities of color disproportionately impacted by gun violence with the necessary skills to increase the impact of their organizations and the field overall.

"CVI leaders across the nation are on the frontlines working to keep our neighborhoods safe, and it is critical that they receive the resources to help bolster their efforts to reduce violence. As we continue to see local, state, and federal officials increase their investment in the CVI field, leaders will need the management and executive leadership training we are offering to implement and scale long-term CVI strategies," said **Dr. Chico Tillmon, Director of the CVI Leadership Academy**. "These CVI leaders live and work in the communities they serve, and they are often in the best position to disrupt cycles of violence. By investing in their skills, CVILA will help communities across this country become safer and more resilient."

The rigorous six-month curriculum taught by expert practitioners and scholars includes hands-on training in program management, staff retention, data literacy, evaluation, and more, with the goal of fostering well-rounded and skilled CVI leaders who can enhance public safety at scale. The program culminates in a community capstone project, requiring participants to apply their knowledge to real-world challenges. The CVILA will then evaluate the efficacy of the training with the support of researchers from the world's leading universities, who will conduct qualitative and quantitative studies to measure the program's impact on violence reduction.

"The scourge of gun violence in our country is a crisis and has a disproportionate impact on communities of color who have endured the dual burden of gun violence and the harms of the criminal justice system. Now more than ever, we must support the individuals who dedicate their lives to keeping our communities safe. It is an extraordinary privilege and honor to work with these leaders and invest in their human capital as they work to turn the tide on one of the most pressing and important challenges we face as a nation," said **Roseanna Ander, Executive Director of the University of Chicago Crime Lab**.

A team of key community violence intervention leaders from across the country serve on the CVILA Steering Committee. These leaders helped craft a curriculum and aided in the academy's development to provide participants with transferable skills that they can leverage to support other organizations and groups, fostering well-rounded and skilled leaders within their communities and improving overall public safety.

"Over the years, I have seen the devastating impact of community violence firsthand and understand the gaps we must close to create safer, healthier, and more hopeful communities for

everyone. I was fortunate to be part of the planning committee and bring to life this educational experience designed to build the skills these rising leaders can utilize to enhance their work to increase peace in their neighborhoods,” said **Anthony Smith, Executive Director of Cities United**. “It’s evident that community violence intervention is a possible and necessary approach to public safety, and I’m thankful the CVILA will prioritize these leaders and help them change their city for the better.”

The CVILA is part of the [University of Chicago Community Safety Leadership Academies](#) (CSLA), an initiative focused on bringing the leadership and management practices of policing and CVI into the 21st century. The CSLA was developed by the University of Chicago Crime Lab based on the Crime Lab’s [research](#) showing that changes in police department management can drive reductions in both violent crime rates and police use of force. CVILA is also based on CVI-specific research, namely around the Rapid Employment and Development Initiative (READI) program in Chicago, which was estimated to reduce harms to society from involvement in crime and violence by between \$182,000 to \$916,000 per participant, a statistically significant reduction of almost 50%. Dr. Chico Tillmon, Director of the CVI Leadership Academy, ran this program as Executive Director of Heartland Alliance. With a dual focus on improving management of policing and CVI, CSLA is the most robustly evaluated public safety training ever offered in the U.S.

The CSLA also houses the Policing Leadership Academy, which launched in May of this year and aims to improve policing and reduce violence in the most violent neighborhoods in America.

The participants in the CVILA’s inaugural cohort are:

- Leonard Dungee – Atlanta, GA
- Dante Johnson – Baltimore, MD
- Freedom Jones – Baltimore, MD
- Jason Little – Chicago, IL
- Sheri Ruffai – Chicago, IL
- Rodney Phillips – Chicago, IL
- Samuel Castro – Chicago, IL
- Edwin Galletti – Chicago, IL
- David Williams – Chicago, IL
- Jaunita Pye – Chicago, IL
- Toni McNeil – Stockton, CA
- Myesha Watkins – Cleveland, OH
- Dajuan Kennedy – Detroit, MI
- Alivia Langley – Hartford, CT
- Guadalupe Washington – Houston, TX
- Daniel Zamora – Los Angeles, CA
- Skipp Townsend – Los Angeles, CA
- Lyle Muhammad – Miami, FL
- Tanisha Gibson – Minneapolis, MN
- Rasheedat Fetuga – Nashville, TN
- Patrick Young – New Orleans, LA

- Fayth Henderson – New York, NY
- Anthony Jennings – New York, NY
- Nicole Myers – New York, NY
- Lakeesha Eure – Newark, NJ
- Raysean Brown – Orlando, FL
- DeAngelo Harris-Rosa – Philadelphia, PA
- Sierra Ellis – Portland, OR
- Julius Thibodeaux – Sacramento, CA
- Dwayne Comer – Syracuse, NY
- Jovan Davis – Washington, DC

"As Illinois Attorney General, I understand the critical importance of community safety, especially in the face of the gun violence that is disproportionately impacting communities of color. The launch of the Community Violence Intervention Leadership Academy is a significant step toward addressing this crisis. Equipping these leaders with essential skills and knowledge is crucial in our collective efforts to make lasting change. I commend the CVILA for its visionary approach, and I look forward to the role it will play in building safer and more resilient communities in Chicago and across our nation," said **Kwame Raoul, Illinois Attorney General**.

The Community Safety Leadership Academies are supported by Ken Griffin, Michael Sacks, Tom and Susan Dunn, IMC, OCC, RJ Melman and Lettuce Entertain You, John DeBlasio, United Airlines, Matt Hinerfeld and Nora Jaskowiak, Jeff & Maggie Shapack and Shapack Partners, Neubauer Family Foundation, and Dalio Education's Connecticut Opportunity Project. We're grateful for their generous support.

"We are proud to be part of this groundbreaking initiative whereby the University of Chicago is leading the way with innovative approaches to supporting those working to keep communities safe," said **Michael Sacks, CEO of Chicago-based GCM Grosvenor**. "The work of the Community Violence Intervention Leadership Academy will add tremendous value to public safety leaders and the safety of cities across the country."

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The University of Chicago [Community Safety Leadership Academies](#) is an initiative of the [University of Chicago Crime Lab](#). It includes the Policing Leadership Academy and the Community Violence Intervention (CVI) Leadership Academy, first-of-their kind programs to train the next generation of policing and community violence intervention leaders from across America.