

MEE has extensive subject-matter knowledge and more than two decades of authentic, grassroots experience with community violence, youth violence and gun violence from a public-health perspective. MEE has also conducted extensive research into the causes and solutions of community violence. Through projects with CDC's Injury Center and national thought leaders such as Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, Dr. Carl Bell and Dr. Joe White, we have astute insights into the most critical and pressing violence issues impacting low-income, urban, underserved and marginalized communities. See details on some of these projects, and the evolution of MEE's approach, in these case studies.

City of Philadelphia, Department of Health

Operation Peace in Philadelphia (OPP) (1994)

Philadelphia's First Ever, Citywide Anti-Violence Media Campaign

In the early-1990's, following an increase in gang violence in the city, then-Health Commissioner Dr. Robert Ross (now CEO of The California Endowment) declared youth violence a public-health emergency for the City of Philadelphia. CDC dispatched a Medical Epidemiologist to the City of Philadelphia in October 1992. Operation Peace in Philadelphia (OPP), a citywide community-based anti-violence/peace promotion initiative, was developed to help reduce this epidemic. OPP's components included community-based collaborations and a youth violence awareness campaign.



After working on MTV's national anti-violence campaign "Enough is Enough," MEE developed and produced one of the first culturally relevant, anti-violence media campaign for OPP - targeting adults as the solution to what is often seen as a youth problem. The media campaign was designed to make Philadelphians aware that violence is preventable if we confront communication and cultural barriers. MEE's TV PSAs won a Finalist Award in the 1996 International Health and Medical Film Festival.

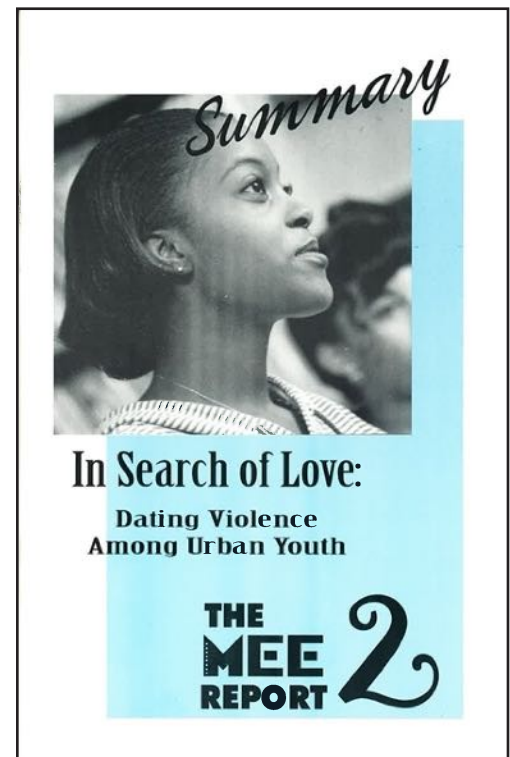
CDC-National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

In Search of Love: Dating Violence Among Urban Youth (1996-1997)

MEE's National (Audience) Research on Intimate Partner Violence

MEE, in collaboration with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and The Minority Health Professions Foundation in Atlanta conducted formative research to examine intimate dating violence among low-income Black urban teens, ages 16-18. In the first phase of this project, MEE conducted focus group research on intimate violence with urban youth in Philadelphia, PA; Baltimore, MD; Gary, IN; Atlanta, GA; and Los Angeles, CA. Interviews were also conducted with national experts in the fields of sociology, psychology, relationship violence and sexual assault.

The resulting report, In Search of Love: Dating Violence Among Urban Youth, uncovered dynamics of urban youth culture that allow, support and even encourage violence in male/female dating relationships. One of the study's findings was that many young African Americans have had so many unhealthy influences in their lives that they find themselves without the skills to navigate the tricky waters of intimate relationships. A comprehensive Teen Dating Violence Intervention Plan was developed and presented to the CDC. It was based on a holistic, community-wide approach to changing youth behaviors.



Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency **Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia Youth Violence Prevention Campaign (2005-2008)**

*A 3-Year, Citywide Social Marketing Campaign to Reduce and
Prevent Youth Violence*



In 2005, Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, a violence prevention expert from Harvard University's School of Public Health, recommended to then-Pennsylvania State Representative (now U.S. Congressman) Dwight Evans to hire MEE to research and develop an innovative public health approach to reducing urban youth violence in Philadelphia. Overall funding came from PCCD to the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition (fiduciary agency), with an average budget of almost \$1 million a year.

MEE developed and implemented The Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia (www.mee productions.com/phillyblueprint/), a major citywide community-education campaign to reduce youth violence. Blueprint, built on a public-health approach to responding to youth violence, was a research-based and evidence-based population-health campaign featuring messages "by and for" youth. It was extensively evaluated.

The campaign was implemented over the course of three years and included:

- Conducting audience research for the award-winning Blueprint documentary, "Real Talk" (2007)
- Active community-engagement and more than 400 active partnerships with community-based organizations (recruited through MEE's Community Network)
- Radio and TV advertising
- Grassroots, peer-to-peer community outreach, using MEE's trauma-informed CATs Model (which included training mentors on infusing social/emotional skills)
- Employment of more than 100 youth a year to conduct community and peer-to-peer outreach throughout the city as part of its Community Action Team – making MEE the #1 employer of low-income Black and Latinx youth in the City.

Getting Involved With Young People...That's the Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia

BLUEPRINT
for a Safer Philadelphia

Take control! Take a role!

Don't Give Up... Stand Up!



Don't we all deserve to live in a safe community? It's not too late. We can stop the violence. Get our young people the help they need, to be safe and to succeed. One person can make a difference. Join the Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia Campaign.

Call 1-888-570-BLUE • Visit www.phillyblueprint.com

BLUEPRINT
for a Safer Philadelphia



Year Two (25)



Year Three (50)



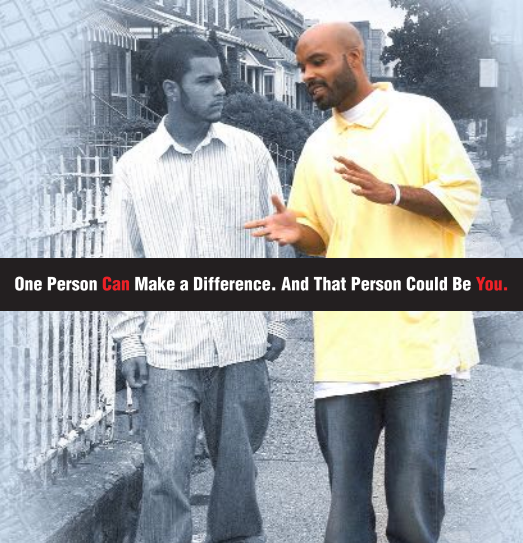
Year Four (100)



Outcomes:

- Employment
- Adult Mentoring
- Youth Development (Life Skills)
- Self-Efficacy & Leadership





One Person Can Make a Difference. And That Person Could Be You.

Reduce violence in Philadelphia by investing in our children and youth.
The Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia Campaign needs people just like you.
 Take Control! Take a Role! Together, we can make a difference.

Getting Involved with Young People...That's the Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia.

Call 1-888-570-BLUE or visit www.phillyblueprint.com



Most importantly, there was a measurable drop in youth violence during the last two years of the Blueprint campaign and for several years after the funded (radio/TV/transit advertising) efforts ended.

It was in the third year of the campaign that behavioral health issues among youth workers doing peer-to-peer outreach began to emerge: they included angry, quick-tempered and unfocused youth; inconsistent work ethic; and parents collecting their children's paychecks to use for their own purposes. Rather than just fire these youth, MEE committed to helping them overcome barriers to being better employees, and more importantly, more balanced and positive young people. We consulted several behavioral and mental health experts, including Dr. Carl Bell, Professor Joseph White, Ph.D., and Dr. Mark Rosenberg. They suggested looking at the bigger picture of what was going on in these young people's daily lives. This fueled MEE's transition in thinking to include both a public- health and trauma-informed lens in developing violence interventions.



Multiple Research Sponsors: TCE, DBHIDS, DC-DMH, IVPA, MEE Moving Beyond Survival Mode: MEE's Seminal National Research on Urban Trauma (2008-2009)

Promoting Resilience in Low-Income Black Communities Faced with Chronic Stress & Trauma

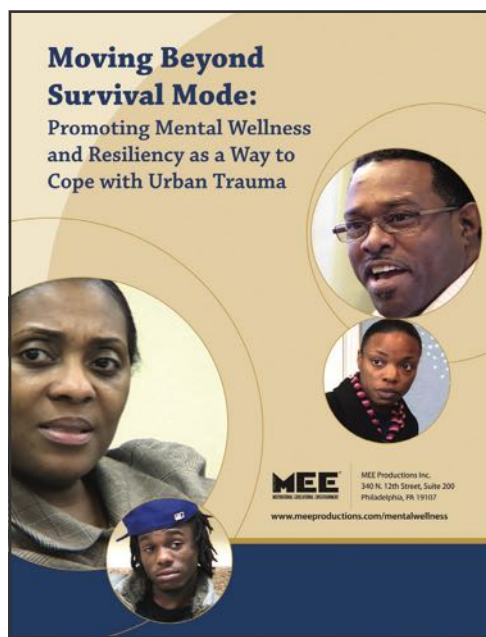
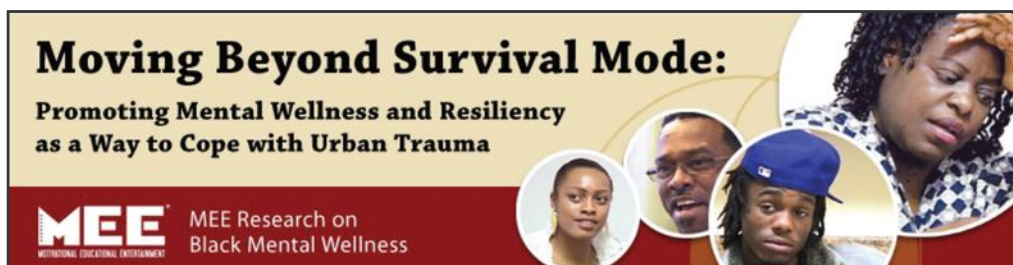
In 2008, MEE embarked on collecting primary data to understand stress, trauma, and the perceptions of mental health in poor, inner-city Black communities. This two-year institutional research board (IRB)-approved, community-participatory research project aimed to increase

knowledge about the need for culturally relevant strategies to promote mental wellness, aimed at educating the Black community, local service providers, and national policymakers. Funding was provided by Dr. Arthur Evans, then Commissioner of the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS), now CEO of the American Psychological Association (APA); and Dr. Robert Ross, CEO of The California Endowment.

MEE conducted videotaped interviews with leading national experts, Dr. Carl Bell and Dr. Joseph White, who offered sobering insights into the stressors of unrelenting poverty and youth violence, what it's like to live in "survival mode," and the key protective factors that can leverage the inherent resilience of Black youth in dealing with the complex emotional issues they face. MEE then conducted IRB-approved focus groups with low-income Black youth and parents in Philadelphia, Washington, Oakland and Chicago to "get under the surface" of misinformation about mental illness and to explore the environmental barriers that impact how communities make decisions about seeking mental health services.

The 2010 report, *Moving Beyond Survival Mode: Promoting Mental Wellness and Resiliency as a Way to Cope with Urban Trauma*, aimed at educating the Black community, local service providers, and national policymakers, uncovered the need for culturally relevant strategies to promote mental wellness (including protective factors that strengthen

copied and survival strategies). The findings of that research led MEE to start incorporating and promoting protective factors in all of its behavioral-health interventions as a way to counter the structural and health conditions that keep young Black youth in survival mode in low-income urban communities in all its behavioral health projects.



Illinois Violence Prevention Authority (IVPA) Innovative Models for Engaging Communities Around Youth Violence (2010-2012)

Community-Tested and Evidence-Informed Models to Promote Protective Factors to Reduce Youth Violence in Chicago

In 2010, following the release of *Moving Beyond Survival Mode*, the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority (IVPA) selected MEE to replicate two of its youth-engagement model in Chicago as part of the Neighborhood Recovery Initiative, a comprehensive community effort to reduce violence and increase adult engagement with low-income Black and Latino youth.



MEE used a train-the trainer model with 23 community-based agencies in the Chicago area to implement two of its peer-to-peer education models: Community Action Teams (CATs) and the Parent Leadership Action Network (PLAN). These models work together to increase positive coping behaviors among low-income youth and surround them with protective factors, including a stronger safety net of community adults. CATs provided jobs plus mentoring and social/emotional skills for 1,500 youth and PLAN provided jobs for 1,000 parents (of adolescents) in Chicago neighborhoods with the highest rates of poverty, violent crime, domestic distress and youth disconnected from their schools or community (See <https://www.mee productions.com/ivpa/> for additional details about this Chicago-based project.) Through our work with NRI, we learned that protective factors can address multiple stressors, through the implementation of strategies that increase positive coping behaviors among our youth and surround them with protective factors that include a stronger safety net of community adults.

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Parent-to-Parent Outreach to Reduce Youth Violence: A Conversation with Dr. Joseph White



This spring and summer, MEE has provided technical assistance and comprehensive training to the Neighborhood Recovery Initiative (NRI), a comprehensive effort to reduce youth violence and increase adult engagement and leadership in the Chicago area. One of the two components based on MEE community-engagement models is the Parent Leadership in Action Network (PLAN). More than six hundred sixty local parents, caregivers, grandparents and foster parents have been trained to engage their peers in dialogue and problem-solving about youth violence prevention, mental wellness and positive coping strategies to stress and trauma. One of the key training tools used was a customized video featuring Dr. Joseph White, known to many as one of the "fathers of Black psychology."

MEE has a long standing relationship with Dr. White, who, in addition to being Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Psychiatry at University of California Irvine, also served as an expert resource for *Moving Beyond Survival Mode: Promoting Mental Wellness and Resilience as a Way to Cope with Urban Trauma*, the report MEE released in May 2010. Many of you have seen Dr. White featured in our video, *Successfully Mastering the Journey For African American Male Youth*, as he presents an African-centered perspective on what it takes for Black males to navigate the obstacle course of identity, intimacy, racism and self-doubt. He is also the author of *Black Men Emerging: Facing the Past and Seizing a Future in America and African American Fathers: An Invisible Presence*.

In this issue of *UrbanTrends*, we are pleased to share a recent interview conducted with Dr. White. He provides great cultural insights for parents and caregivers who are committed to raising members of today's hip-hop generation youth into healthy men and women. His insights are a strong foundation for a collaborative exchange of ideas, strategies and solutions that can strengthen the protective shield around underserved youth and their families.



Parent Leadership in Action Network

Parenting Today's Teen

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2. Effective Parent-Teen Communication	Page 2
3. Mental Wellness for Parents	Page 4
4. Building Resilience in Our Children	Page 5
5. Parent First Aid - Support and Strength in a Crisis	Page 6
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For parents and caregivers, and for those who care about today's hip-hop generation and about those to come, Dr. White addresses these complex issues impacting the social and emotional development of our youth. The goal is to share a strong message of hope.

DC Department of Mental Health (SAMSHA-Funded)

I Am the Difference (2010-2014)

Citywide Youth Suicide Prevention Campaign

MEE was contracted by the DC Department of Mental Health (DC-DMH) in 2010 to develop a youth suicide prevention campaign. MEE used a protective-factors approach in the development and implementation of the campaign. This four-year project was predicated on promoting positive coping behaviors and encouraging supportive behaviors by peers who have stressed or depressed friends in Washington, DC. The empowering spirit of the campaign is captured by the slogan "I Am the Difference."

Based on youth focus groups conducted in 2011, the media based prevention campaign included a wide range of promotional materials, a website, prints ads and four radio ads (PSAs). Campaign implementation expanded in 2012 to incorporate community mobilization activities which were initiated by a series of Chat & Chews with youth service providers in DC. In 2013, the final year of the campaign, MEE continued to print campaign materials on an as-needed basis; we also assisted in updating and managing content on the campaign's Website. MEE's Community Network was leveraged to promote mental health services and resources provided by the City and provide campaign updates to campaign partners.



The California Endowment / Open Society Foundations **Heard, Not Judged –MEE's National Research with Boys & Men of Color (BMOC) (2015-2016)**

Insights into What Young Men of Color Need to Go from Surviving to Thriving



As a follow-up to its Moving Beyond Survival Mode research ([link here](#)), MEE continued to explore the protective factors approach in a subsequent major national research project, with 18–24-year-old men of African and Latinx descent. In 2016, MEE published the results of its national, community-based participatory audience research with young males of color in nine U.S. cities. Focus groups were held in Philadelphia, Oakland, Los Angeles, Long Beach, New York City (Bronx), Baltimore, Atlanta, New Orleans and Detroit. All participants were in the lowest 20% in income of the U.S. population, with average annual household incomes of less than \$40,000. The research was co-funded by The California Endowment and The Open Society Foundations.

“Heard, Not Judged – Insights into the Talents, Realities and Needs of Young Men of Color” documents what we heard directly from 18-to-24-year-old men of African and Hispanic descent about what they needed, and how they needed it, to make better, healthier daily decisions. We got BMOC to open up about their lives — the everyday challenges they face, their use of technology, who matters to them (and who doesn’t) and the need for access to jobs, education, mentoring and health care.

MEE designed and tested an “online and offline (community)” framework to help BMOC cope with the everyday challenges they face and succeed by giving them access to education, mentoring, employment and healthcare – resources and tools need for “winning” in life. MEE’s audience research validated that a brand-driven, private-sector approach could help BMOC succeed by developing their “opportunity-finding” skills and giving them ongoing, daily access to a digital platform and associated offline resources, connecting them to a diverse range of community touch-points and services mobilized to challenge their minds and support them in evolving from surviving to thriving. The findings also continued to support MEE’s hypothesis that the risk factors and social determinants of health that continue to keep young Black males at a disproportionate disadvantage for survival must be addressed through the application of a protective-factors framework.



Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Statewide “Be Present Ohio” Campaign (2016-2019)

*A Trauma-Informed Youth Suicide Prevention Campaign
(Online Training for Youth Leaders)*



In 2016, MEE was selected by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) to develop and implement a SAMSHA-funded youth suicide prevention campaign that focuses upstream on primary prevention and the protective factors young people need to deal with depression, stress, anger, loneliness, bullying or harassment.

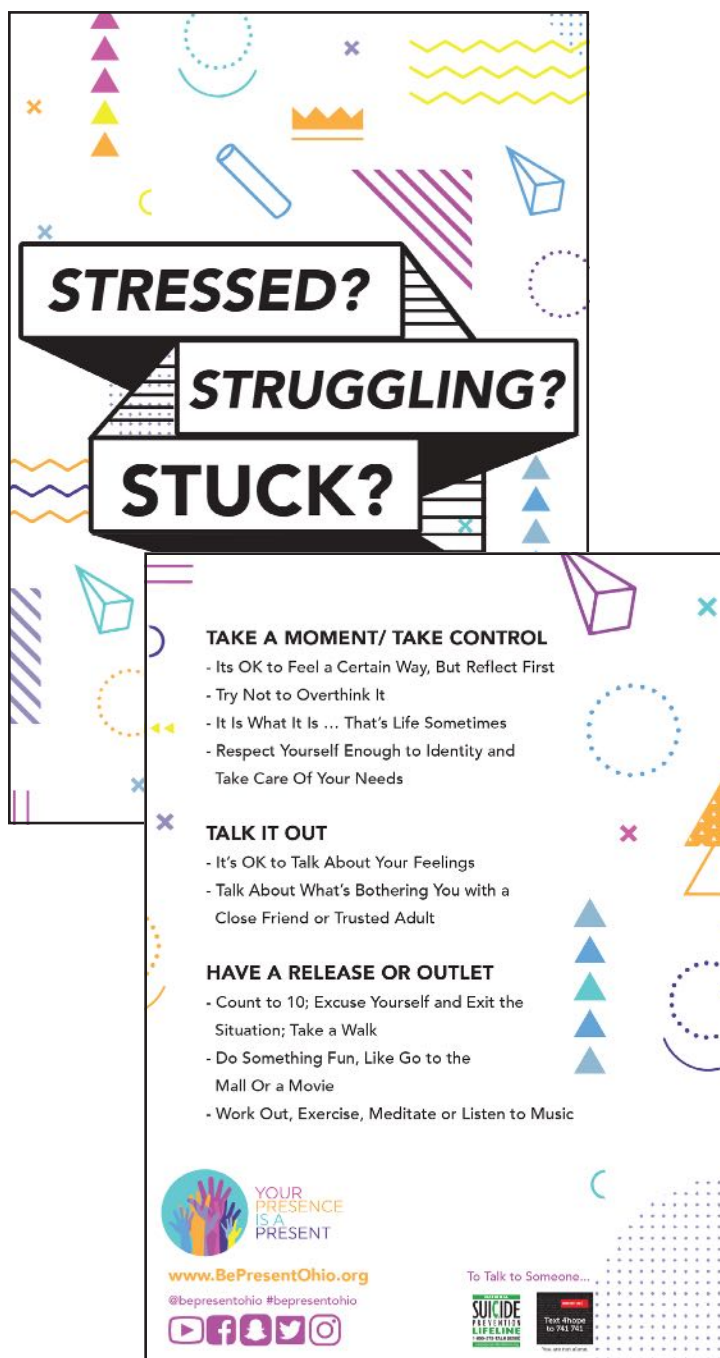
Formally launched in November 2017, the statewide “Be Present Ohio” campaign focused upstream, on primary prevention and protective factors put in place to support young people in their schools and homes and within their peer groups. The Be Present campaign, with the slogan, “Your Presence Is a Present,” focused on youth, teens and young adults from high school through college and early adulthood. MEE developed the messages and materials for the campaign following comprehensive audience research with teens across Ohio. The campaign educated and empowered young people to step up and help peers, friends, classmates and siblings with needed support. It also linked young people to local and state-level resources, information, immediate crisis intervention and longer-term care (if needed).

Our initial, broader-community level efforts launched with a dedicated website, social media, YouTube channel and Pandora radio ads and an array of print materials, all created using a “by-and-for-youth” process. The campaign’s outreach activities, including numerous on-the-ground events and activities in most areas of the state, engaged more than 16,000 youth and adult residents, while the YouTube videos; social media ads, branded website and other online components reached millions of Ohio youth to the Campaign’s digital assets.



As part of the campaign activities in Ohio, MEE also beta-tested and evaluated an innovative resiliency-training intervention that used a mix of online and offline (in-person, community-based) strategies to equip youth with tools to handle stressors commonly associated with peer pressure, peer conflict and other challenging realities of this period of their lives. This intervention addresses a multitude of life and social challenges, with a multi-component approach that promotes protective factors and thriving coping skills, including connections with caring adults, and linkages to trauma-informed behavioral health services. MEE is applying the learnings from this beta test to enhance the intervention, which has the potential to give tens of thousands of youth the skills and confidence they need in order to react/cope differently to traumatic and stressful episodes and experiences that they face or will face in their community. Key features also include connecting youth to positive adult allies and mentors; and linking them, through warm handoffs, to behavioral health and healthcare services in their community.

Postcard: (Front & Back)



Flyer:

