

Ambassador Peace Initiative
The Reverence Project
Two Year Review

UCLA

SOCIAL JUSTICE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP



Overview

The following report summarizes the available outcomes and effectiveness of the Ambassador Peace Initiative (API), which was designed and implemented by The Reverence Project, a nonprofit currently operating in South Los Angeles, California. This Initiative was created to achieve gang violence prevention and intervention drawing upon a holistic, community-based approach. While it does not represent a formal evaluation, this report will describe outcomes that emerged from quantitative and qualitative data that demonstrate the effectiveness of the API. It will also identify opportunities for future improvement.

Executive Summary

The Reverence Project (TRP) is a nonprofit organization established in 2014 that serves the Watts, Compton, and Willowbrook communities by offering healing services, safety advocacy, and community leadership training. Their Ambassador Peace Initiative (API) is composed of a Community Sentinels Leadership Academy (CSLA), Public Safety Roundtables (PSRT), and wide-ranging case management services. These programs are all designed to change the narrative surrounding violence by centering victims rather than perpetrators of crime in the healing process. *Review of all available data demonstrated that young adults who participated in the API program were effectively equipped with the skills and tools needed to improve their mental and physical health, achieve economic stability, engage with local government, de-escalate conflicts, break the cycle of violence, and protect their communities.*

It is critical to note that this report is not a formal evaluation. The original research team that was retained by The Reverence Project was not able to fulfill its commitment to evaluate the Ambassador Peace Initiative. This was not the failure of TRP so much as an inability of the selected to both understand the needs of community based evaluation and to follow up on what they promised to deliver. As a result, there was no formal evaluation. However, in April of 2021, a different research team affiliated with the UCLA Social Justice Research Partnership reviewed available quantitative data at the end of the two years of program implementation. Quantitative data was previously collected by the leadership of TRP who surveyed CSLA participants before, during, and after their experience with API, and tracked the number of attendees and outcomes with each program.

Once all quantitative data collected by TRP were reviewed, additional qualitative interviews were conducted with two TRP staff members, as well as one CSLA Graduate and one dropout. Based on the data reviewed and the interviews, it is clear that the Ambassador Peace Initiative is a well organized and promising approach to reducing gang violence and building individual and community strengths.

Implementation Highlights

There was no formal process evaluation. However, in addition to the CSLA curriculum provided to clients, API reported accomplishing the following process-focused, programmatic goals:

- ◆ **Forming strong relationships with community members.** Both mentees and staff reported healthy, helpful, communicative relationships with each other. One case manager explained how he saw himself in the young men and women he mentored, saying, "I was them yesterday. They can be me tomorrow." As a mentor, he reported working to help students feel comfortable; this enabled him to understand their past struggles and future goals. "You are better than your worst day," he tells them. "When you talk to me, you don't need to be crucified."
- ◆ **Empowering both dropouts and graduates of CSLA to stay involved with API.** There were many pathways to involvement for participants in CSLA. A graduate of the first cohort was hired as a paid intern for the second, third, and fourth cohorts. In turn, a dropout from the third cohort is currently enrolled in the fifth cohort and looks forward to receiving her first aid certification. There were also mechanisms to ensure involvement. Although services were initially designed to be provided for one year, individuals have the option of accessing extended support from The Reverence Project in many informal practices.
- ◆ **Establishing a network of community organizations.** API works with the Professional Community Intervention Training Institute (PCITI), Watts Gang Task Force, Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches, Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice, and other community based organizations as well as informal groups. They have obtained many perishables including fruits, vegetables and other items for their food giveaway program from Community Healing Garden and MudTown Farms. A recent survey indicated that CSLA participants have also accessed services from Youth Opportunity (YO) Watts. This network of organizations have helped them build a set of resources that participants in API can draw upon.
- ◆ **Resolving disputes through Case Intervention Workers.** Graffiti and tagging have long been potential catalysts for violent activities and gang war, all based on what appears on walls and public spaces. When a police officer was murdered trying to intervene with someone tagging a wall with gang graffiti, API stepped in to negotiate an agreement between the Los Angeles Councilmember Joe Buscaino's CD-15 office and the Gang Alternatives Program (GAP), connecting through the Public Safety Round Table. GAP entered into an agreement to remove graffiti from public spaces. However, when a union dispute arose, causing a work stoppage on the part of GAP, API met with both sides which put pressure on Council District 15 to enter into a union-approved agreement with GAP so services could be continued.
- ◆ **Taking key advisory roles positions in local community and public health meetings to reduce poly-victimization.** Over the past two years – even before the pandemic, API staff participated in the Community Action for Peace meetings with the Los Angeles Department of Public Health (LADPH) Trauma Prevention Initiative (TPI). The LADPH TPI continuously provides hospital-based outreach and community-based intervention at the County level by bringing together organizations to provide services to residents and communities impacted by violence. Together these organizations engage in capacity-building, systems change, and violence prevention strategies. As an outgrowth of this work, one of API's crisis intervention workers (CIW), Luis Morales, was appointed to the advisory board for the Trauma Recovery Center at Harbor-UCLA Hospital. API also became one of the name partners of the MLK Healing and Trauma-Prevention Center. In these roles, API was able to extend their reach beyond case management referrals and collaborate with other community organizations. This work also informed the efforts of the Community Sentinels Leadership Academy (CSLA).

Logic Model

The intent of the Ambassador Peace Initiative is to provide young adults with tangible skills, holistic services, and community organization referrals for addressing community violence, as summarized by the Logic Model. Policy advocacy and outreach are related goals to this mission. The Logic Model is included below to reinforce knowledge of efforts as funded by BSCC.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Process Measures	Outcomes	Impact
<p>Partnership with BSCC California Violence Intervention Grant Program</p> <p>Contracted partnership with P.C.I.T.I.</p> <p>Established partnerships with highly communicative agencies</p> <p>Trauma-informed Project Activities</p> <p>Evidence based community engagement strategies</p> <p>40 years of combined efforts and expertise in the fields of community and international gang violence intervention/prevention and victims advocacy</p>	<p>Community Sentinels P.C.I.T.I. Collaborative Training</p> <p>Cognitive Motivational Case Management/Coaching/Mentoring</p> <p>Ambassadors Commission</p> <p>Social Service Linkage</p> <p>Workshops/Community Engagement</p> <p>Alternative Healing Direct Services</p> <p>Intensive Compassionate Healing Resources</p> <p>Community Education Campaign</p>	<p># of participants involved in the Community Sentinels Academy</p> <p>API Community Sentinels Program Certification</p> <p>Accessibility of services for 1-year</p> <p># and type of support/services provided to the participants</p> <p># of community members outreached to</p>	<p><u>Objective 1A:</u> Outreach, engage/train 100 community members; regarding public safety priorities, victim/survivor of crime services and violence prevention strategies.</p> <p><u>Objective 1B:</u> Increase community knowledge of crime reduction strategies/solutions.</p> <p><u>Objective 1C:</u> Increase community access to violence intervention/prevention services.</p> <p><u>Objective 2A:</u> Reduce secondary and poly victimization of survivors by the criminal justice and healthcare systems.</p> <p><u>Objective 2B:</u> Uplift voices of victims/survivors of crimes as leaders in the realm of violence prevention and civic engagement.</p> <p><u>Objective 2C:</u> Increase compassionate delivery of services/resources to self-identified survivors of crime</p> <p><u>Objective 3A:</u> Provide enhanced culturally sensitive and culturally competent trauma-informed services for underserved and unserved marginalized populations</p> <p><u>Objective 3B:</u> Catalyze demographic specific cultural shifts through community focused and individual based violence prevention efforts</p> <p><u>Objective 3C:</u> Prioritize the voices/roles of the most marginalized through innovative community education</p>	<p><u>Goal 1:</u> Counter gang involvement by expanding partnerships with highly communicative agencies and current/former gang members in order to enhance community safety.</p> <p><u>Goal 2:</u> Provide intensive trauma-informed care, healing and recovery services to men, women, boys, and girls self-identified as victims/survivors of crimes.</p> <p><u>Goal 3:</u> Extend intensive trauma-informed care to serve the LGBTQQI male and female gang population</p>	<p>A 25% decrease in reported instances of poly-victimization for participating 16-30 year olds over a 1 year period.</p> <p>A 25% increase in community access to violence intervention/prevention strategies and discourse</p> <p>A 25% increase for the targeted populations participation in healing recovery and positive health oriented activities</p> <p>Improved quality of life for participants and their families</p>

Community Sentinels Leadership Academy

The Community Sentinels Leadership Academy (CSLA) provided training in civic education, public safety strategy and policies, conflict resolution/mediation, restorative justice and community outreach and advocacy to four cohorts of API students. The individuals who participated in CSLA received a weekly stipend, uniforms, and a mentor to support them with personalized services during the 10-week program and in the months that followed. Training was designed to transform participants' thoughts about self, community, and public safety in order to re-negotiate lives without crime and violence.

Over half of the CSLA curriculum is provided through a strategic partnership with Professional Community Intervention Training Institute (PCITI). PCITI is led by Aquil Basheer, a retired Los Angeles County firefighter who now trains firefighters, law enforcement, activists and organizers in community based violence intervention and prevention training. In the first segment of training, Basheer instructs API staff who are then able to support the youth in obtaining certifications in violence intervention and prevention. CSLA students receive in-person training in multiple strategies leading to conflict resolution and restorative justice through a hands-on, role-play-based model. The training walks individuals through the incidents and challenges that they might experience as an advocate, intervention worker, or case manager. Students gain preparation for community meetings with law enforcement or public health officials. PCITI training enables API participants to act as first responders to low level, quality of life issues such as loitering, school disputes, and personal conflicts in the Watts and Compton communities.

CSLA has successfully graduated a total of 67 students from 4 cohorts out of 126 individuals initially enrolled. It is also critical to note that even students who did not complete the program were able to access case management services and earn certifications. Out of this 126 total, 67 individuals have been Certified in Advocacy by Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice (CSSJ). These individuals are equipped with the civic education necessary to understand the relationship between survivors of crime, including their own families, and themselves. Additionally, out of the 126 individuals who enrolled in the four cohorts, 67 have been certified by PCITI, ensuring that they possess professional conflict resolution skills. In reporting the remaining certifications, 48 individuals have been CPR/First Aid certified, 15 have been certified in Financial Literacy, and 12 have been certified in Restorative Justice. A smaller group of students certified in Restorative Justice have gone on to lead healing circles in their school and other organizations.



Brief Documentary Narrative

In reviewing the quantitative data, there was a brief period when qualitative interviews were completed. Given the time limit, two interviews were conducted remotely – one with a participant who graduated from CSLA and the other with a participant who did not complete training. The interviews are summarized below.

The graduate of the program was a Watts resident and the mother of a 9-year-old daughter who participated in the first CSLA cohort. When asked about the best and worst moments of her training, she embodied the experiences of the individuals who had successfully completed the instruction:

“ The best was getting involved with community leaders who are turning their lives around after going through the prison system. They were there to educate the community to do better. I had no worst moment; I had a great time doing it.”

The first participant went on to describe how she learned how to be humbler and more patient throughout her experience, which she noted especially helps her in parenting. "Being where I am from, we don't usually see many gang members turn their life around," she explained.

“ Here there are great community leaders. They try in every way that they possibly can to help you. They make sure that these kids are going to school and making money in a legit way and actually keeping them safe. They have a group called PCITI. A lot of those people became great mentors to me. They taught us self-defense. If you see a situation escalating, but can't step in, call someone that can, not the police. Sometimes all a person needs is to sit and listen. They taught us how to reach that point.”

When asked what drove her to successfully complete the program, she responded, "so I could learn to protect my daughter in the environment that she lives in. The kids who are killed are getting younger."

The participant also expressed gratitude for her CPR certification, learning the different steps to effectively reach local government officials, and the healing circles.. She highlighted the way that the program could potentially reach more people and improve by obtaining more resources. "As of now, I feel like what they are doing is the best to help the community," she concludes. "The more people out there, the better. The world's not gonna change itself."

The second qualitative interview was completed with a young woman who enrolled then dropped out of the third cohort of CSLA and has now re-enrolled in the fifth cohort. She first learned about API when a staff member came to her high school, described the program and told her about the stipend. The participant

became interested in learning about her community and engaging in a program that might help to make things better for the residents – including youth --who lived there. Now, after participating in both cohorts, she believes the program offers youth "a really great experience" and says she would highly recommend it. "It was really fun. We did a lot of skits. It was really cool being hands-on because a lot of youth don't like to sit and listen," she explains. When asked what caused her not to finish during her first enrollment, she admitted, "I was caught up in other things and I wasn't really focused at the time."

These two qualitative interviews were augmented by surveys that were sent to the 67 graduates, and completed by 39, who reflected positively on their experience in CSLA:

- ◆ "I learned so much from this program and I'm really glad I took time to participate in the program."
- ◆ "Our community isn't as bad as everyone thinks. Our community is viewed as a high crime area. People don't understand our struggle."
- ◆ "I just appreciate the opportunity to be in the academy [CSLA] that helps to better my community."
- ◆ "It is a good way to stay out of trouble and we learn how to communicate with each other."
- ◆ "This class really made me love myself and my community way more; it made me want to be more involved."

Other participants described how the experience of API has enabled them to feel safer in open-ended survey responses. One explained, "It really taught me to observe. I know how to communicate better." Several believe that the program should be scaled up and implemented in other sites– both in Los Angeles and in other cities.

When asked what their key takeaways from CSLA were, students replied:

- ◆ "Try talking things out instead of hurting one another. find a good way to relax your mind when stress takes over."
- ◆ "Teaching what you know to others."
- ◆ "I have taken away from the academy [CSLA]: conflict resolution skills, mediation skills, intervention skills and a broadened view of community."

When asked if they had any comments or suggestions for the CSLA staff and training team, students replied:

- ◆ "This needs to be in schools nation-wide."
- ◆ "I like the way the staff/team acted during the program."
- ◆ "Keep it going and do what y'all do because if y'all helped me y'all can change someone else too."
- ◆ "No but I really enjoyed being with you guys, it was an amazing experience."

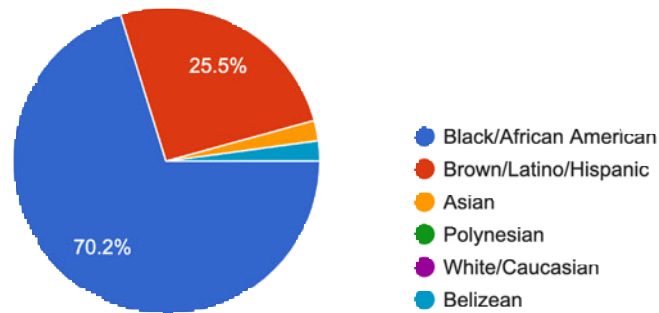
All of these survey responses must be understood in the context of who actually participated in the program and their survey responses.

Program Participants and Survey Responses

The individuals who responded to the surveys offer an important portrait of the actual CSLA program participants. It is crucial to remember that surveys were sent out to individuals who comprised the second, third, and fourth cohorts of CSLA. All of the surveys were analyzed together. Analysis was conducted because the distribution of responses was not tracked on a reliable timeline and the results must be presented in aggregate. Not all graduates responded, but those who did represented key demographic data and programmatic feedback. The number of responses are indicated alongside each chart.

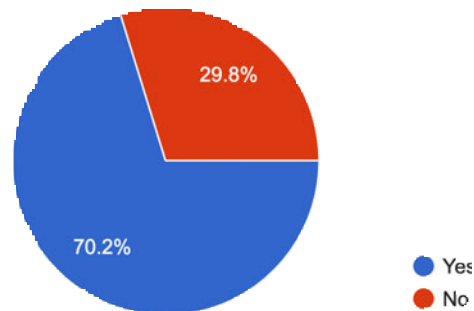
What is Your Ethnicity?

47 responses



Do You Identify as First Generation US Citizen

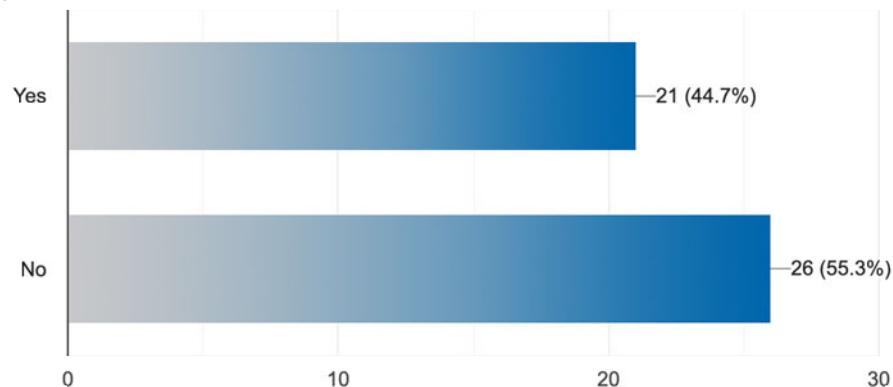
47 responses



Nearly half of CSLA participants reported some sort of gang ties.

Have You or Close Family Been Involved with a Gang?

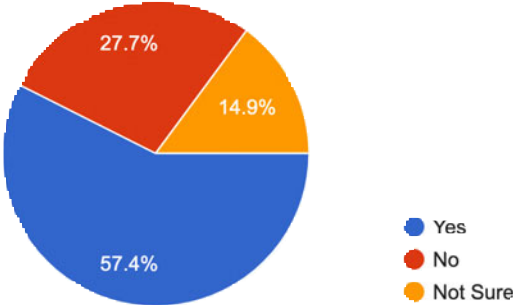
47 responses



Over half of CSLA participants identify as survivors of crime. In order to enroll in the program, participants must self-identify as a victim of crime or as LGBTQIA, or be involved with gangs personally or through family.

Do You Identify As a Survivor?

(A survivor is someone who has been harmed directly or indirectly; family member killed, sexual abuse, bullying, robbery etc.) 47 responses



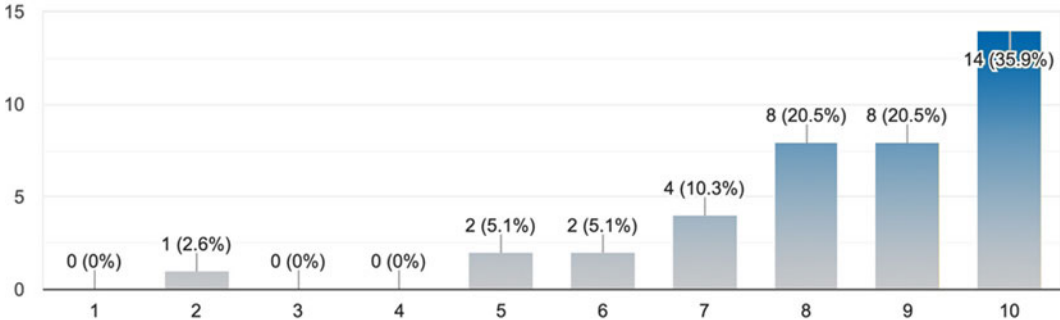
Survey Results

CSLA participants are surveyed before, during, and after the program to track the changes in their views and evaluate their experience. Once again, the surveys were not reliably tracked so the information is presented in aggregate.

The overwhelming majority of graduates reported that CSLA had a significant impact on their views about the value of community and public safety. On the x-axis, the scale of potential responses 1-10 are listed, with ten representing the maximum change in view about the value of community and public safety while one represented the least change. The y-axis scale shows how many students indicated a certain value, such as eight students responding with an eight.

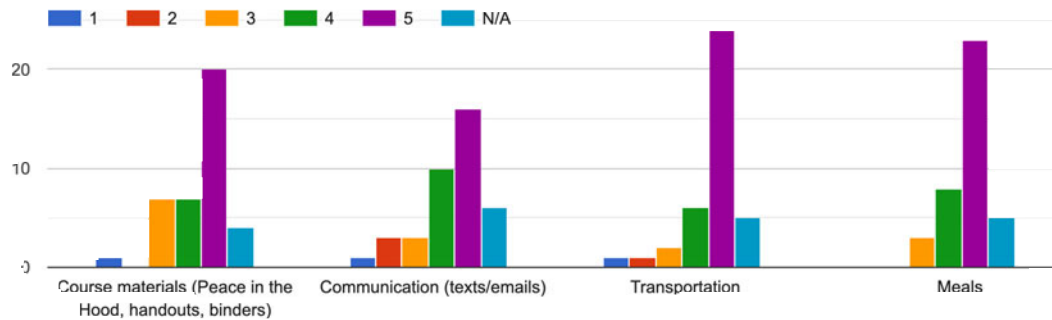
How Much has the Academy Changed Your View About the Value of Your Community and Public Safety?

47 responses

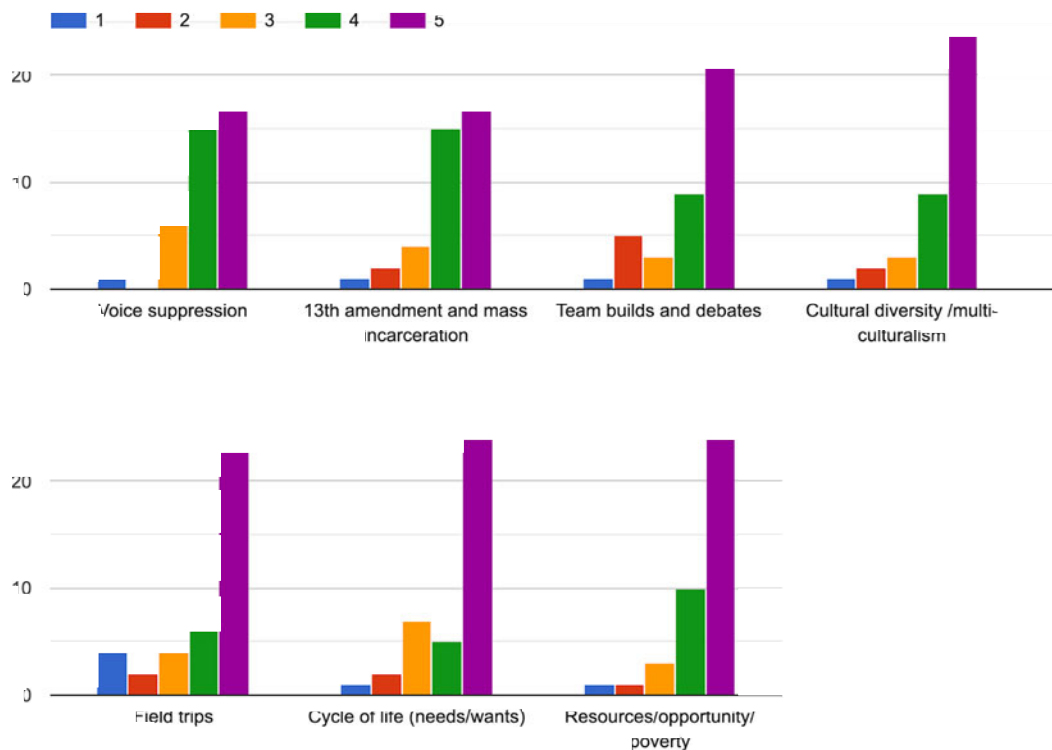


The majority of participants reported maximum satisfaction with a set of accommodations including course materials, communication, transportation, and meals, with five representing maximum satisfaction while one represents the most minimal satisfaction. The N/A signification means that a student did not use the listed accommodations.

How Satisfied Were You with the Following Accommodations?



The majority of participants reported maximum satisfaction with a set of accommodations including course materials, communication, transportation, and meals, with five representing maximum satisfaction while one represents the most minimal satisfaction. The N/A signification means that a student did not use the listed accommodations.



Public Safety Round Table

The work of CSLA is reinforced at the Public Safety Round Table (PSRT). It is here that API invites people from a wide variety of organizations to join their conversation about public safety in order to collaboratively create visible changes. This group meets twice a month for 90 minutes. It is facilitated by either the project director, CIWs, or advocates. When asked to describe the impact of the PSRT on community involvement, Oya Sherrills explained,

“When we entered these conversations there was stagnation around the healing- and victim-centered approaches of violence prevention. Now more people have adopted our language. Violence is a public health issue as much as it is a public safety issue. Now you hear the LA county department of public health saying this more and more.”

The work of the PSRT also leads to effective conflict resolution. After a police officer was murdered while trying to intervene with an individual tagging a wall, Phillip Lester and Arthur Rodriguez, crisis-intervention workers from API stepped in to de-escalate the situation. They contacted GAP (Gang Alternative Program) and helped to broker a new agreement between the city and the GAP program. The GAP program was able to continue working to address the graffiti in the community by painting over it. Lester and Rodriguez found out that there was a dispute between the GAP program and CD15. As a result, the CIW talked to each side separately and brought them together to resolve it. It is critical to both report and understand that PSRT helped initiate planning, kick-starting dialogue by identifying the need to take action on the disagreement and solve the problem. This is the role that the PSRT plays in terms of multiple community issues.



Case Management

All of the case management that API engages in is driven by the Cognitive-Motivational model. This is a theory driven model, based on cognitive behavioral therapy, that is designed to help people understand their thought patterns and how they may either help or hinder them in reaching their goals. Case management is facilitated and provided by all four Reverence Project staff members. The case management process begins with the Intake Form which draws upon motivational interviewing and asks that clients voluntarily answer questions about family, schooling, legal history, and mental and physical health. The intake form can either be completed in person at TRP's office or over the phone. As part of asking questions, staff practice active and reflective listening. Once they have filled out the form, mentees are then asked to check the boxes of which services they would like to access. Responding is not mandatory and they may skip any questions they do not wish to answer. Information from intake forms is entered into TRP's data collection software within the Apricot system. Mentees receive Case Management services primarily through CSLA. However, any person who completes an intake form is eligible to receive services. Throughout the case management process, staff members continue to act as mentors for individuals. Whether one needs a substance abuse treatment center referral, transportation to a doctor's appointment, a new cell phone, music therapy, a spa visit, legal advice, or emergency housing, API's case management team will work to provide it, so that mentees can have the foundational resources they need to thrive.

API's initial goal was to have clients complete 100 intake forms. This turned out to be an underestimate. Over the past two years, API surpassed that goal and clients have completed 126 intake forms. When asked what practices helped them achieve this goal, Project Director Oya Sherrills attributed it to the development of meaningful relationships with youth that eventually "brought other folks in. They went and got their classmates. They were like 'I just finished this. You guys should come and do this too!'" Additionally, API staff are credible messengers who identify with and genuinely care about the mentees and their future. Both mentees and mentors report building meaningful relationships with each other. This reinforced the development of the participant base of API. Additionally, individuals who may have had past criminal histories identified strongly with mentors as well as with the PCITI staff which is comprised of former gang members. All of these mentors and teachers offered an example of how to serve one's community in a meaningful way. Most importantly, programming is designed to deter youth from ever pursuing a lifetime of dangerous behaviors, offering them positive role models to guide them in developing their identities and positive lifestyles.

Challenges

Several factors limited the ability of API to serve youth, collect data, and expand their efforts.

- ◆ **The small staff is limited in their time and energy.** TRP once had 9 employees, but a reduction in grant funding and the impact of the global pandemic led to a significant reduction in staff size. The remaining four API staff must "wear many hats" and perform a wide range of jobs for the organization. Some of the work is very serious and creates vicarious trauma. As a result, API required training opportunities for staff to manage their stress and teach self-care habits. Despite these efforts, there were still issues of staff strain and burnout. It is apparent that the combination of limited funding and the long-term impact of the pandemic had negative implications for the API staff.
- ◆ **The fourth cohort of CSLA was forced online due to the global pandemic.** The impact of the pandemic removed the key element of hands-on learning and significantly reduced cohort graduation and certification rates. It also slowed the momentum building from the previous three cohorts and made it more difficult for staff mentors to connect with mentees.
- ◆ **Record-keeping procedures were inconsistent and spotty.** About half of mentee intake forms were completed on paper but were not entered into the Apricot database. Additionally, survey and quiz results had varying response rates. This made it difficult to ensure that surveys were being administered consistently and reliably. The lack of clear procedures for data collection thwarted API's ability to measure their impact in relation to the intended outcomes.
- ◆ **Staff reported extended timelines and underfunded projects.** Due to these many factors interacting together, timelines were disrupted and had to be extended. For example, API set out to support a resident working towards public safety, helping him in his efforts to have a speed bump installed on his street. What should have been successfully achieved over a brief period of time took over a year to bring to resolution. Because of the pandemic, the time and resources needed to bring this rather everyday issue to a swift conclusion were completely absent. As a result, both the community and law enforcement were caught up with an issue that should have been easily resolved.
- ◆ **Partner organizations did not provide certificates to students.** All 67 graduates received restorative justice training, but only twelve were officially certified. Because different restorative justice facilitators were employed for each cohort, some lacked the resources to provide official certifications.

Opportunities for Improvement and Expansion

Based on the review of available data and the qualitative interviews, it was determined that there are several ways API can improve and expand their services:

- ◆ **Strengthen current communication networks.** API can more effectively "spread the word" regarding their efforts and recruit effectively for future cohorts by increasing distribution of flyers, posting consistently on social media, creating more email and text blasts, event tabling, and by making visits to schools and community organizations. Due to the digital divide that continues to be a problem throughout South Los Angeles, "word-of-mouth" continues to represent a major communication strategy. Additionally, people involved with CSLA represent an important source of recruitment: it is important for them to tell their friends and family to enroll in the program, perhaps even incentivizing individuals with gift cards for each individual newly enrolled.
- ◆ **Organize and streamline data tracking efforts.** Creating procedures to more effectively build the Apricot database with data from Mentee Intake forms, outcomes from survey design and administration as well as the intentional organization of results will make it much easier to track data as well as evaluate API's performance on their outcomes. There should be a focused effort on creating and fulfilling projected outcomes. Because there was so much focus on program implementation and Covid response, this was not possible in this funding period. However, this issue must be addressed in the future.
- ◆ **Gain media coverage to build momentum.** API produced their own podcast series and also engaged in an online piece with KTLA (a local television station), but did not receive much news coverage other than that. "There has to be a continuous push for funding and highlighting community based public safety on the ground as a priority," Oya Sherrills insisted. Once API is able to gain additional media coverage, this will attract ongoing opportunities for engagement and funding through helping the public learn more about the benefits of their community based public safety strategy.
- ◆ **Generate political pressure to shift public budget priorities away from corrections.** There is now a move by policymakers to provide funding to support programs that focus on wellness and healing. But at both the state and federal level, allocation of funding has either been stalled or stopped altogether. Additional media coverage paired with political advocacy can generate funding for grassroots organizations such as TRP and programs such as API.
- ◆ **Streamline the grant-application process and build a solid funding strategy.** API had set the informal goal of applying for two grants per month but in the end submitted an average of one grant application per month. The ability of API to continue their work is dependent on achieving additional funding from CalVIP, the Weingart foundation, as well as other public sources. API will only be able to expand their work if they can establish an improved grant-application agenda.
- ◆ **Initiate an individual donor campaign.** Augmenting the bureaucratic nature of the grant-making and award process, API must undertake a campaign to attract the involvement of individual donors. As part of this they must develop direct relationships with their funders. The lack of funding plaguing service providers and the need for intentional expansion efforts could be addressed by this new initiative.

- ◆ **Establish relationships with volunteer clubs.** Various organizational tasks, such as transcribing Mentee Intake forms from paper to Apricot, and must be completed by volunteers. From UCLA, USC, California State University Dominguez Hills and Long Beach to local high schools and senior organizations, there are many untapped opportunities for recruiting volunteers to help with administrative work.
- ◆ **Build single-unit emergency shelters.** API provides emergency housing in the form of hotels or short-term rentals from the site Airbnb to mentees experiencing domestic violence or engaged in human trafficking. If they could identify land and build single units, even more consistent housing options could be provided to victims of trauma.

Final Thoughts

The Ambassador Peace Initiative is helping significant proportions of students in each of their cohorts to graduate high school and transition to higher education, trade school, community organizing, or employment. They are enabling young people to learn about public safety, conflict de-escalation, restorative justice, history, and civic engagement. After individuals learn how to apply their newfound knowledge to enact change in at the community level, they are empowered to pursue leadership roles in their communities. It is important to being to envision how this work can be scaled up to serve more communities in Watts and Compton, other parts of Los Angeles, and even cities across the country. It is crucial that this model be studied and developed further in the future.

Most significantly, The Ambassador Peace Initiative and the work of The Reverence Project are in dire need of sustainable funding. They represent the embodiment of a community-based nonprofit focused on developing and supporting youth and young adult leadership in the Watts-Willowbrook-Compton communities. UCLA has engaged in an ongoing effort to help engage small, grass-roots nonprofits, including The Reverence Project, in lifting up indigenous leaders and nonprofits. However, their efforts – which truly represent the community – are often short lived because they lack financial resources and the type of support that large nonprofits with grant-writing departments are able to attract. Additionally, when funds are attracted, they are limited and must be dedicated to operating expenses. There is little to no money for capacity building, evaluation, database expansion, communication and information technology as well as systematic fundraising. *It is strongly recommended that sustained funding be awarded by both public and private organizations. It is critical to support this worthwhile effort.*