

## **Saving Lives: Alternative Approaches to Reducing Gun Violence**

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**Abstract :** This paper highlights an innovative and nontraditional violence prevention program that is making a noticeable impact in what was once one of the country's most violent communities. With unique and tailored strategies, the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship, established in Richmond, California, combines components of evidence-based practices with a community-oriented focus on relationships and mentoring to fill a gap in services and increase community safety. In an effort to highlight these unique strategies and provide a blueprint for other communities with violent crime problems, the authors of this paper hope to clearly delineate how one community is moving forward with vanguard approaches to invest in the lives of young men who once were labeled the communities' most violent, even the most deadly, youth. The impact of this program is evidenced through the fellows' own voices as they illuminate the experience of being in the Fellowship. In interviews, fellows' describe how participating in this program has transformed their lives, and the lives of those they love. The authors of this article spent more than two years researching this Fellowship program in order to conduct an evaluation of it and, ultimately, to demonstrate how this program is a testament to the power of relationship and love combined with evidence-based practices, consequently enriching the lives of youth and the community that embraces them.

**Keywords :** gun violence prevention, high risk youth, law, policing justice

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