

Virtual, Six-Week Violence Interruption Program in Washington, DC Concludes With Youth Civic Engagement Projects

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Cedric Thompson, CEO of CIRTE

Washington, DC – The Center for Innovation Research and Transformation in Education (CIRTE) is excited to report on the success of its virtual Public Safety Academy. The program, created in conjunction with the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program, is geared toward 25 youth in Washington, D.C. who reside in high crime police service areas who are interested in public service careers.

The ultimate outcome of the Public Safety Academy is to equip youth with skills to seek alternatives to violence and crime. The work experiences through the academy are designed to help attendees (1) identify and apply strategies to overcome trauma in their lives; (2) unpack and understand frameworks for effective civic engagement activities; (3) identify and apply sound financial literacy habits; and (4) learn resiliency through mentoring. Each participant worked with peers to develop culminating civic engagement projects that were carried out during the week of July 27 – 31, 2020. These projects were designed to combat challenges they've identified in their community which include Gun Violence, trauma, and persistent unemployment rates. Attendees also beamed with excitement from the lessons they acquired in the culturally relevant financial literacy segment of the program. Each participant was given \$100 to start buying and selling stocks

in their personal investment portfolios.

CIRTE's CEO, Cedric Thompson, shared, "This opportunity is beneficial for the community as a whole and it answers the call to create the next generation of civic-minded leaders."

CIRTE designed the program when the D.C. Department of Employment Services requested proposals for the six-week work experience that help prepare DC youth, ages 18-24, with becoming the front-line leaders within their high-crime PSA communities.

Further, Thompson shared, "The timing for this kind of program is paramount as we experience the civil rights of many being challenged across this nation. Currently, youth groups are centering themselves in the movements to combat police brutality; calling for increased support services within communities by realigning city budgets and bringing fresh perspectives that could lead to equitable policy and legislation." CIRTE plans to continue to work with organizations to solidify ongoing support for innovative and transformative youth development opportunities in this city and nation.

Though CIRTE is the creator of the program, several other organizations have assisted greatly. These organizations include Hope Work Youth Healing Team of Camden, NJ, who provided peer-to-peer trauma training. Transition Walkers who provided weekly mentoring and mindfulness training and coaching on the development of civic engagement projects and Carolina Canyon Corporation who provided culturally responsive financial literacy. CIRTE would like to thank these partners for their contributions to the program.

Learn more about CIRTE at TheCIRTE.com

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