

JULY 22, 2015

BY VOICES OF NY

SOURCE: AMSTERDAM NEWS ORIGINAL STORY

Bolstering NYPD-Community Relations



More than 900 NYPD officers, the most recent graduates of the police academy, and 425 community members met at the Apollo Theater in Harlem in an effort to improve relations and build mutual respect, writes Tatyana Bellamy-Walker of the Amsterdam News.

The program, entitled Operation Conversation, used performance and dialogue and was sponsored by the All Stars Project.

All Stars Project co-founder Dr. Lenora B. Fulani directed the ensemble and guided the conversation with empathy. Both cops and teens shared their worst life experiences.

Ariana Watson, 18, of Queens opened up about her family life. "I have been co-parenting since I was 10 years old," she said to the audience.

She, like some of the other teens, were made nervous by the navy-blue NYPD jackets that filled the audience. "I feel extremely uncomfortable between two police officers," she said.

For their part, some police officers in attendance also expressed discomfort and their concerns.

"The hardest thing for me is watching a 3-year-old cry and their mom say we're going to take them away," said NYPD officer Joe C. Carolan of the 33rd Precinct in Upper Manhattan.

Nefta Richards, of the 20th Precinct in the Upper West Side, explained that she was unprepared for the community's disregard of her position.

"The lack of respect that you get ... I didn't come on this job to hurt anyone," Richards said.

Outside the Apollo, a group called Occupy Existence protested the event. Read about what they had to say and also what other officers and community members said about Operation Conversation in Amsterdam News.