



AN INNOVATIVE
POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS INITIATIVE
CREATED BY THE ALL STARS PROJECT



Awarded the 2015 IACP/CISCO
Award for Community Policing



OVERVIEW

Operation Conversation: Cops & Kids is the All Stars Project's award-winning police-community relations program designed to foster positive interactions between the police and young people from poor communities. Through a series of workshops and theatrical productions that use performance, improvisation and conversation, police and inner-city youth develop and improve their relationship. In partnership with Mayor Ras J. Baraka and the City of Newark, the All Stars is launching a pilot version of the program in New Jersey in 2016.

The program was initiated in late 2006 by Dr. Lenora B. Fulani, co-founder of the All Stars Project, in the wake of the shooting of Sean Bell in Queens, NY. Since the program's inception, Dr. Fulani and a team of trained facilitators have led 132 workshops involving 1,618 youth and 1,318 police officers. In addition, 2,203 community members and 4,469 police officers have participated in Demonstration Workshops –public performances held at centrally located venues

in New York City, such as the Apollo Theater in Harlem. In 2011, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) officially incorporated Operation Conversation: Cops & Kids (OCCK) into the training of its officers in all five New York boroughs on the local precinct level and all new Police Academy graduates. Operation Conversation: Cops & Kids has been recognized by the **International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)** with the **2015 CISCO Community Policing Award**, and in 2013, by the **Audience Development Committee (AUDELCO) Award for Excellence in Black Theatre**.

The program has also continued to grow in reach and impact and is a partner of John Jay College of Criminal Justice's 2015-2016 Bridging the Divide: Reimagining Police Community Relations Initiative.



THE ALL STARS PROJECT, INC.

The All Stars Project (ASP) is a national nonprofit organization that transforms the lives of youth and poor communities using the developmental power of performance, in partnership with caring adults. Since 1981, ASP has created free afterschool programs for young people from inner-city communities and has grown into a leading advocate for the establishment of the field of Afterschool Development as an approach for engaging poverty in America. Led by President and CEO Gabrielle Kurlander, the ASP reaches 50,000 young people and adults in six cities – New York, NY; Newark, NJ; Chicago, IL; San Francisco Bay Area, CA; Dallas, TX; and Bridgeport, CT. ASP is 100% privately funded and has an annual operating budget of \$10 million. Its programs are made possible through the generosity of more than 5,000 individuals and hundreds of corporations and foundations.



ENDORSEMENTS



“The All Stars Project is an incredible program. I’m completely supportive of what’s happening at the Flamm Center. My administration will do whatever we can to make sure these programs flourish, that this center is alive with people and that young people know what’s going on here.”

– **RAS BARAKA**
Mayor, City of Newark



“I have long said that bringing the police and the communities we serve together requires that we see each other for who we are. Operation Conversation: Cops & Kids helps make this happen. When police officers and inner-city youth perform together, each sees the other through new eyes. Barriers fall and trust rises. The NYPD is striving to make this happen through a range of new initiatives, but our collaboration with the All Stars Project remains one of the best partnerships we have for helping cops and kids realize that they have more in common than they think.”

– **WILLIAM J. BRATTON**
New York City Police Commissioner



“I had the chance to go to New York and visit Dr. Fulani and the All Stars Project and ... I had the opportunity to go to [a Cops & Kids Demonstration Workshop] at the Apollo Theatre and see law enforcement officers and youth from urban areas on a stage. And I tell you, it brought me to the edge of my seat and it filled my heart. For I saw myself in those young people. I saw myself in those policemen. I saw that we’re similar in more ways than we’re different, and that through a mere conversation, how two groups can come together and understand.”

– **RONALD S. JOHNSON**
Captain, Missouri State Highway Patrol



“In San Francisco we have segments of our community that are so disconnected from what is going on in the rest of the city, and what All Stars is doing is trying to create a bridge between those communities that have been left behind and the rest of us. I am so committed to creating a safe community that doesn’t leave anyone behind. We cannot really have true public safety, true social justice, a truly successful community, unless everyone is part of that progress. And [All Stars], one city at a time, one young person at a time, is making a real difference.”

– **GEORGE GASCÓN**
San Francisco District Attorney

THE MODEL

Operation Conversation: Cops & Kids uses the All Stars Project's innovative performance-based approach to help police officers and young people break down barriers and transform how they see and interact with the other.

Weekly workshops – featuring theatre games, improvisational skits and conversation – are led by teams of trained facilitators made up of social workers and theatre professionals and take place in community centers and schools around Newark.

Facilitators begin workshops by directing police officers and young people through theatre games and slow motion exercises. These “ice-breakers” help officers and youth interact and share a fun experience.

After a short discussion about the performance, both groups are given a chance to say in two sentences what they want ‘to get off their chest’; generally this is a statement of distrust and suspicion towards the other group. Next, facilitators direct everyone in improvisational scenes which by design, have nothing to do with law and its enforcement (i.e., officers and youth play members of a family choosing a pet).

These shared activities produce a rapid change in the attitudes of police and young people towards each other.

The workshop concludes with honest and frank conversation between police officers and youth. In this transformed environment, they are able to calmly discuss otherwise confrontational issues and began to heal their relationship.



PROGRAM IMPACT

The ASP and the NYPD, under the advisement of Carrie Lobman, Ed.D. (Rutgers University Graduate School of Education), designed a survey that would provide quantitative measures of the impact of Operation Conversation: Cops & Kids workshops. Lobman and her team administered the survey to 105 participants in five OCKK workshops between March 2013 and June 2013, in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx. Fifty-three police officers and 52 youth filled out surveys immediately following their workshop voluntarily and anonymously.

THE SURVEYS WERE DESIGNED TO HELP US ANSWER THE FOLLOWING:

- Do the workshops produce changes in participants' attitudes towards each other?
- Do the workshops produce changes in their behavior when they interact?
- Are there further, collateral benefits?

CHANGE IN BEHAVIOR

An astonishing **100% of young people and 93% of police officers** said the workshops played a **positive role in promoting communication between police and youth** – and 84% of all respondents said the experience would positively affect how they would interact in the future. In addition, **89% agreed that Cops & Kids was a step in establishing positive communication and promoting positive interactions between police and young people.**

CHANGE IN THOUGHT

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of young people and 66% of police officers said they learned something new about the other in the workshop. Written comments further support that the workshop produced a positive change in attitude. Wrote one youth participant: “[I] learned to respect cops a lot more and understand them.” Police officers commented on the young people’s soundness of character (e.g., “well-spoken,” “respectful,” “independent”); the causes and effects of peer pressure; also how receptive young people were to the responsibilities and dangers of police work. Both young people and police officers expressed the desire to feel respected and not pre-judged because of ethnicity, attire (uniform), job or economic condition.

SAMPLE RESPONSES TO QUESTION

Did the kids/officers say anything that surprised you?

POLICE OFFICER RESPONSES	YOUTH RESPONSES
I guess I was surprised to see how similar we are.	I was surprised when many of the cops said they feel as if teenagers don't treat them like human beings and I definitely get what they mean.
I believe all cops should experience this workshop.	Yes. They sounded so much like our family instead of outsiders of the community.
Yes, especially the part where children (inner-city youth) have no place to really hang out, no backyards. They have no place to go other than on the street.	I learned to respect cops more and understand them. I don't hate them. They are people just like me. I think it was really important.
Made me realize how difficult it is for them to be young and misunderstood and how much it hurts them to be judged.	Yes. I realized that they are human just like us and they also face difficulties and not all of them are the same.
One young man stated that he felt the pressures of being a teenager with gangs, the streets and school. I didn't realize how much pressure he felt until he said so.	I really loved how one of the police officers said that he really cares and honestly wants to know how our day is going.



In 2016, the All Stars Project of NJ has launched a pilot of our award-winning police-community relations program, Operation Conversation: Cops & Kids, in Newark. In 2017, we would like to fully launch the program in partnership with Mayor Ras Baraka and the City of Newark.

FUNDING GOAL: \$625,000 (2016-2018)

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Operation Conversation: Cops & Kids (OCCK) fosters positive interactions between the police and young people in poor, urban communities. Through a series of workshops and theatrical productions that use performance, improvisation and conversation, police and inner-city youth develop and improve their relationship.

ACCOLADES

The NYPD and OCCK were recently recognized by the International Association of Chiefs of Police with its CISCO Community Policing Award for the most effective police-community relations work for cities of 250,000 population or greater globally.

HISTORY AND TRACK RECORD

OCCK was originally created in 2006 by All Stars Project co-founder, Dr. Lenora B. Fulani, as an urgent and positive response to the police shooting of Sean Bell. She began leading monthly workshops at PAL centers and churches that engaged mixed groups of young people and police officers in activities that effectively transformed the culture of mistrust between them. In 2011, the New York City Police Department officially incorporated the program into the training of its officers at the local precinct level, and of all new graduates of the police academy.

PLAN AND TIMELINE

GOALS OF 2016 PILOT

- Conduct six OCCK neighborhood workshops, involving 60 young people and 60 police officers.
- Hold a community meeting on the issues of police-community relations and OCCK

In accomplishing these, we will have reached a cross section of Newark's leadership and community, established the foundation for an ongoing program, which is the basis for expanding the regional and statewide conversation about improving police-community relations.

GOALS FOR A "FULL PROGRAM" BEGINNING IN 2017

- At least 12 neighborhood workshops (120 youth and 120 police officers)
- Two "demonstration workshops" for the public (600 people)
- Replication of our facilitator training program to develop a corps of facilitators who can conduct workshops both in Newark and across New Jersey.

FUNDING NEEDS

PILOT PROGRAM/FULL LAUNCH (2016-2018): \$625,000



CITY
OF **NEWARK**
Mayor Ras J. Baraka

NEWARK – May 10, 2016 – Mayor Ras J. Baraka, All Stars Project (ASP) of New Jersey City Leader Gloria Strickland, and ASP of NJ Board Co-Chair Derek M. Di Rasio announced its new partnership with the All Stars Project, a privately funded national nonprofit organization with a long history in Newark, at City Hall. A leader in the field of afterschool Development, ASP programs serve young people in the poorest communities using a unique performance-based approach.

The first event of the partnership will take place on Saturday, May 14, when ASP of NJ and Newark's Centers of Hope will host a free citywide talent show open to young people and community members of all ages. "A New Play for Newark," is being held at 1:30 p.m. at Central High School, located at 246 18th Avenue, Newark.

"We are excited to partner with the All Stars Project of New Jersey to host this talent show at my own Central High School, and put the future generations of Sarah Vaughans, Savion Glovers, and Queen Latifahs on stage. From here, they will continue on to careers of excellence in the performing arts, becoming national and international legends. But they will never forget that their roots, how they began in Newark, and they will spread an important message to the world: the greatness of Newark as a center of the arts. This is truly an appropriate way to celebrate Newark's 350th anniversary. I thank the All Stars Project for their work in developing this program and their commitment to our City's youth," Mayor Baraka said.

Mayor Baraka has a longstanding relationship with the All Stars Project, beginning during his tenure as principal at Newark's Central High School. After taking office in 2014, Mayor Baraka hosted a workshop at Newark City Hall with the ASP Art of Painting the World in Different Colors initiative. That same year, Mayor Baraka appointed Lucy Lopez, an alumnus of the All Stars Project Development School for Youth, as Youth Mayor of Newark.

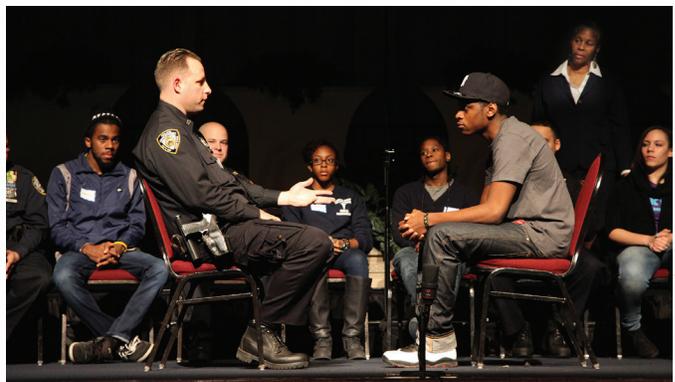
From the Development School for Youth (DSY), where young people engage with corporate America to the All Stars Talent Show Network (ASTSN), where they produce and perform in hip hop talent shows in their own neighborhoods and to its award-winning police-community relations program Operation Conversation: Cops and Kids, the All Stars Project plans to partner with Newark to bring new approaches in youth development to the city.

"As someone who has been in Newark for 17 years, I am proud to partner with Mayor Baraka, who has enthusiastically embraced innovative sources of development for Newark and its people," said Ms. Strickland.

"In New Jersey, more than a thousand citizens, corporations and foundations have come to the table to privately fund Afterschool Development. With Mayor Baraka's backing, this important public-private partnership will provide new pathways for Newark's youth," said All Stars Project President and CEO Gabrielle Kurlander.

"The All Stars has given me and other New Jersey business leaders an effective and personally fulfilling way to invest in making a difference in the lives of young people," said ASP of NJ Board of Directors co-chair and Investors Bank President and CEO Kevin Cummings.

For more information, please visit <http://allstars.org/new-jersey>.



About All Stars Project, Inc.

The All Stars Project is a privately funded national nonprofit organization founded in 1981 whose mission is to transform the lives of youth and poor communities using the developmental power of performance, in partnership with caring adults. Led by President and CEO Gabrielle Kurlander, the ASP involves over 10,000 young people every year in its afterschool programs in six cities across the country.

ASP of NJ is located at the Scott Flamm Center for Afterschool Development, 33 Washington Street in downtown Newark. ASP of NJ is supported by some of America's leading companies including DIRECTV, EY, MetLife, Viacom, PWC, PSEG and Investors Bank.