

# DC Black Church Initiative

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For immediate release

**Media Advisory**

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## **DCBCI Decries Mayor Fenty's Lack of Leadership and Moral Authority in Light of the Most Deadliest Shootings**

*Church does not believe that Mayor actually cares*

**Washington, DC-** The District of Columbia Black Church Initiative, a coalition of 800 local faith communities, calls the recent shootings in DC a tragic end that reflects the lack political leadership of Mayor Fenty and his lack of a comprehensive anti-violence strategy, backed up with both sufficient resources, and a sense of will to stop the violence. Mayor Fenty is the latest African American Mayor since Marion Barry who has allowed a perpetual cycle of violence to fester among African American youths unabated. Black on Black crime does not move Mayor Fenty morally or emotionally, even though he is Black.

Mayor Fenty has been crippled in this area of gang's violence because of his lack of credibility and caring in the African American community. In the backdrop of the shooting, a deep moral pathology has permeated the political and moral leadership of the Mayor and city council, who have neither a strategic plan, sufficient funding, trained personnel, nor the moral commitment to begin to solve the pressing problems of our children and the pathology surrounding Black on Black violence. He refuses to implement known workable solutions like, conflict resolution centers to be placed in high gang areas for the purpose of resolving disputes before they result in the killing of four young people, and the injury of 10 people during the aftermath of a funeral. This shooting also comes within 10 days of the acquittal of Wizards basketball star Gilbert Arenas after having two major gun violations (bringing 4 guns into the locker room of the Verizon Center). The Mayor was silent on this! What message are we sending our children?

Other science based solutions to youth violence advocated by DCBCI is a 100 million dollars over a three year commitment on these specific initiatives to institute a blanket to smother youth violence in DC. This is in addition to the conflict resolution centers.

- **Youth Monitoring Systems** – a system to monitor the young people from the time he enters the juvenile system until he becomes an adult.
- **Mental Health and Homeless Services** – these services will be connected to the conflict resolution centers. Young people needs to have access to mental health services which should be kept confidential and they need a roof over their heads at night to not have a sense of desperation.
- **Universal Youth Safety Net** – this program will connect school, church, youths, sports and mentoring programs. The idea here is simple – keep the 20% of all the young people who are causing all the violence connected to these trusted organizations 24/7. The science says, once these young people are positively connected and occupied, that 20% IS REDUCED TO 1% OVER THREE YEARS.
- **Music, Reading and Rap** - all of the youth literature says that the reason why young people get into trouble is because they cannot read. You improved your community based reading program and fuse it with music and positive rap lyrics. This transforms the individual. Reading is a sense of self esteem. When you cannot read you are angry.

If four young white kids were killed, Fenty would have called out the National Guard, had a major news conference with gang experts and a national summit on youth violence. This would have been done to assure the 40% white electorate but these were just “expendable black kids who would have never amounted to anything” according to the Fenty policy on youth development. ***The crisis of these suggestions cited above is that the white power structure will not allow Fenty and the Council to spend this type of money on black kids. The city will claim that they currently spend over 100 million dollars on youth services but it is neither systematic nor science-based and the money is not targeted as DCBCI advocated. Because of this--- the killing continues.***

His style of governance has offended and created an environment where gang violence has never been a priority for him or his administration. Even though, African American, he seems enormously uncomfortable with African American communities in certain geographic areas of the city. He as followed a purposeful pattern of leadership since Anthony Williams, to ignore the poor, seniors, and Black youth, and only concentrate on white voters who give money and support him. This in large measures means to prioritize his administration by race. In other words, he considered the 40% white population who resides in the city first to be served, followed by the white business structure and the black middle class, (Blacks who support him) while virtually abandoning the vast majority of African Americans and Latinos whose backs are against the wall politically and economically.

Rev. Anthony Evans, President of DCBCI states: "I have been both disappointed and shaken by the Mayor's governance style and his purposeful way of offending literally every segment of the District of Columbia's community. I've spoken to a number of clerics concerning the Mayor's troubling behavior, and many have concluded that not only is this not normal, but there is a deeper concern in his soul that has not been properly addressed in his overall personality. When one cannot talk with a person who demonstrates such a need, our only recourse and action is prayer. About two years ago I placed the Mayor and his family on our prayer list, and continue to pray for some sort of reconciliation between his soul and disturbing traits of his personality because I know, as well as other professionals understand, that the comfort of one's soul and the stability of their personality directly reflect how that individual will treat himself, his aides, his family, and in this case, our city. So we remain in deep prayer for a correction of the Mayor's soul."

A recent Washington Post poll measuring the attitudes of voters toward the mayor bared this out with unbelievable clarity, indicating that Mayor Fenty is viewed radically different between the races. Whites favor him 9 to 1, while Blacks despise him 10 to 1. The poll also included economic attitudes. The poor, seniors, and African American youth, truly believes that he does not care and possess an anti-bias against them on two levels: racial and economic. Given this analysis from both the white power structure and the citizenry of the city, Mr. Fenty finds himself in the middle of a moral desert. Mayor Fenty has also been successful in alienating half of the business community, and literally all of the elected officials he needs to run a city in a cohesive manner so that all citizens can feel protected, respected, and as a vital part of the city and its future.

The shooting is a symptom of an administration that has put money and race above public service, and treating his own racial class with no respect. The city has never been in a situation where the sitting Mayor has been so despised, and in some cases hated. The church position, of course, is to be a place of healing and reconciliation. But even here, the Mayor has been successful in alienating the church community to the effect that he will not allow us to play the role of bringing a city that is racially polarized together. Because of the uneasiness between the Mayor and the faith community he has not been willing to provide the faith community with necessary resources to deal with the issues that our youth has presented us with such as suicide, homelessness, 60% black youth unemployment, gangs, alienation, and most of all, the respect for life. This is why the Mayor has found himself in a moral desert.

Rev. Edwin Jones, a long term Washingtonian and Pastor says, "Most people that I know believe that Mayor Fenty just does not care about them and has no intention of changing his ways. This is troubling."

So there is virtually nothing the Mayor can say or do at this point, after four years of ignoring and disrespecting the African American Community, he cannot reassure us of his moral commitment of fair play and equal justice. To further crystallize and make clear what we are saying, during the recent snow storm, which most meteorologists indicated would be the largest

snow storm in this Districts history, the mayor insisted that the children should go to school. In addition, once the snow was on the ground, the mayor as indicated before, insisted that Ward 1-4 get their snow removed and their streets cleared before Wards 5-8. This is a clear example of the bizarre political leadership that the mayor has been displaying throughout the last four years as head of the city.

### **About DCBCI**

The DC Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a coalition of 800 African-American and Latino member churches works to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare. Our member churches are dedicated to providing critical wellness information and preventive health screening to all of its members. The African-American community ranks first in eleven different health risk categories. NBCI's purpose is to partner with national health officials to provide health education, reduce racial health disparities, and increase access to quality healthcare.