



**Mayor Mitchell J. Landrieu
City of New Orleans**

Violence in New Orleans Address

**Tulane University's Dixon Hall
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****Remarks as prepared for delivery****
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My fellow New Orleanians, we are drunk on violence and should wake up to this fact.

18 days ago at 11:31 pm on a Saturday night in the heart of our City – Will Smith was shot and killed following a minor car accident.

His death leaves a wife alone, three children without a father, his fellow teammates in shock, and a hole in the heart of a hurting city.

It has been rightly said about all these murders, the tragedy is on ‘both sides of the gun’.

In this case, on the other side of the gun was Cardell Hayes. Now he is in jail, but he has a family too - a five year old daughter.

One life lost. Many more lives changed forever. Swallowed up by a cycle of violence that came and went so fast it was almost like a dream... or a nightmare.

And a City is left to wonder why?

Since that terrible night, the news coverage has been non-stop.

But the other big story remains unnoticed, unreported. And really it is the shame of our city.

Sean Payton called it a dirty ‘little secret.’ Well, it is big and it’s not a secret.

The deadly violence is with us every day, all day. And the media goes through the motions, which frames our thinking and discussion. A murder or shooting or armed robbery means 90 seconds at the top of the hour – footage of crime scene tape, maybe a security camera photo, a mug shot, a brief interview with a neighbor or friend, hype about a violence wave or crime spree.

But that’s it. No broader context. No further discussion about what has become the wall paper of American life – always in the background, but little noticed.

I look at these pictures a lot.

1003 names, 1003 men and women lost to murder since I took office 6 years ago.

And less than 24 hours after Will Smith was killed another life was taken.

But for this murder victim there were no headlines, no big TV stories or editorials in national papers.

His name was Bryan Brastfield, he was 31 years old, the first of 6 murdered since Will Smith was shot 18 days ago.

Let us also remember the recently departed:

**Jermaine Curry
Brian Miskell
David Ducros
Juan Moreno
Keenan Lewis**

Such a tragedy... and sadly just a drop in the bucket.

Since 1980, the year Prince performed on TV for the first time; over 650,000 people have been murdered in the United States of America.

That's more lost to murder than Americans killed during all the wars of the last 100 years – combined, but we never talk about it.

We are numb to the daily violence, and only a shock to the system can wake us from this dazed slumber.

Sometimes it is the death of a celebrity like Will Smith. Other times it is a horrible mass shooting like Sandy Hook.

And sometimes it is the death of an innocent child.

That was the case four years ago in New Orleans.

Five year old Briana Allen was standing on her grandma's front porch during her cousin's tenth birthday party.

Three teenagers were driving by and saw someone they knew and wanted dead. They opened fire with an AK-47.

A bullet ripped through Briana's gut and all her father could do was hold her tiny head in his hands. The blood pooled on the porch beneath birthday balloons, life seeping out of her and out of the City of New Orleans.

Suddenly everything stopped and collectively we all gasped at the horror, but even as the entire city mourned, the violence continued unabated.

Here is the rest of the story.

Briana's father was soon arrested for another murder. He is now serving life behind bars.

Meanwhile, Briana's uncle would be dead within the year; ambushed by two men with assault rifles.

However, the true epilogue in this terrible story is actually prologue for the future of New Orleans. It is about little Ka'Nard Allen.

It was his 10th birthday party interrupted by gunfire four years ago. He was hit in the neck and his cousin Briana was killed.

But for the grace of God, Ka'Nard survived, although he couldn't escape the violence all around him.

Five months later, his father was fatally stabbed by his stepmother. And then, nearly a year to the day of his cousin Briana's death, Ka'Nard was again caught in the cross fire, this time shot in the face along with 18 others at a Mother's Day second line.

Twice this child came within inches of getting his head blown off.

And we expect little kids like Ka'Nard to soldier on to stand on their own two feet.

But could we? Could anyone? Could you, could I?

Well I have looked into Ka'Nard's eyes and touched his cheek, knowing that it will forever carry a scar from the bullet that grazed his fresh baby face and almost robbed him of his life.

His other scars run deep, but are not yet visible to us.

We've seen this before. It has been going on for generations.

Let me take you back to another Mother's Day. It was 1994, 22 years ago when 9 year old James Darby, right around the same age as Ka'Nard and Briana, was murdered.

It started at A.L. Davis Park during a pick up football game. A little girl got hit in the face and she went home in tears.

There she found her drunk 19 year old brother Joseph. He took one look at his sister's black eye, felt disrespected, and flew into a rage. He grabbed a gun and jumped in a car.

You can predict the rest.

It was a short trip back to A.L. Davis Park. Joseph stuck his shotgun out the car window and shot into the crowd. He hit James in the head, killing him instantly. Nine years old.

And in this case, again the tragedy is on 'both sides of the gun'. The pain and agony is not just over losing one child, but two.

9 year old James and 19 year old Joseph, one child buried in the cold ground another child in Angola Prison for the rest of his life.

To keep Joseph in prison, the state has already spent about \$460,000.

We are again left to wonder what could have been.

As the years go by, the violence has become so engrained, so baked in.... it is now part of our culture... each murder, one part of the larger whole.

It is a pattern of behavior spanning decades. Conditions on the ground almost predict the outcome.

Indeed, from that Mother's Day in 1994 to today, over 4,600 people have been murdered in New Orleans. It is shocking.

More people murdered in our City during the last 22 years than American soldiers lost during the War in Iraq. More American citizens than lost in the terrorist attack on 9/11 and many more than have been killed by ISIS.

So it has been decades of urban warfare on our city's streets. And how have we responded as a nation?

Gunshots for anything, murder over nothing. Even little kids can tell you – out here it is 'kill or be killed,' it's that simple.

If this does not sound familiar to you here uptown or in the halls of Tulane University there is a good reason for that. Things that happen off campus may as well be on another planet. So many of us live a block away from each other, but are often a world apart.

It is happening and it is happening to us as a people, as a city. But this doesn't just come out of nowhere.

Murder and violence in all forms is the poisonous fruit that grows from the soil of injustice, racism, and inequality - fertilized by guns, drugs, alcohol, broken families and disintegrated social structures.

Refined over many centuries, frustration turns to cynicism which becomes misery and despair.

Hope fades, hate grows and you begin to feel like you have nothing to lose.

All it takes is a spark and there is blood on the street.

So some say it has always been this way.

I say if we made this problem, we can fix it. We have to!

So our approach is smart and comprehensive. It is focused on strengthening neighborhoods, fixing broken institutions, broken systems and helping broken people.

So for example, we've nearly tripled funding for NORD and have supported innovative reforms that improve our schools. The results: our kids are learning. Drop outs are down, test scores are up and more of our young people are graduating.

In the long run, all our work creating a city of peace is dependent on what happens in our schools.

So thank you to all the teachers, students, parents, and school administrators with us here today.

The other big piece of the work we are doing together is NOLA FOR LIFE, which is our comprehensive murder and violence reduction plan.

There are over 30 different initiatives that are part of NOLA FOR LIFE. And one of those programs is Ceasefire New Orleans where Violence Interrupters who grew up on the streets now work to keep the peace.

They have credibility in the community and literally go to murder scenes to talk with the victim's friends and family, trying to prevent more bloodshed by interrupting potential retaliation.

Another centerpiece of NOLA FOR LIFE is our aggressive Group Violence Reduction Strategy, which brings gangs and groups from across the city to Tulane and Broad and put them in the court room.

In the room we have the carrot and the stick.

Chief, the District Attorney, DEA, FBI, ATF, and the US Attorney all tell it like it is. They say there are three options – dead on the street, sentenced to life in prison or accept help.

Then nonprofit service providers offer everything from job training to help finding housing/get help or go to jail!

It is a tough message, but some are stuck in their violent ways. We must act to preserve the safety of the community/and through the new NOPD led Multi-Agency Gang unit we have handed down 114 grand jury indictments to these violent offenders.

But here is another thing we have learned.

The vast majority want to get out of what people call 'the life'... because 'the life' on the street is no life at all. We think that with a little help they can get on a different, better path.

And it is this mentality that we also bring to our other NOLA FOR LIFE efforts, including our prisoner reentry initiative, which helps returning citizens coming out of jail start a new life.

We seek to make contact early, usually within 72 hours of release. And now we have over 120 people in the program, getting help finding jobs, housing, and whatever else is needed.

At the city, we've also 'banned the box' that requires job applicants to reveal their criminal record on the written application. Now, an individual with a criminal record can get an interview and explain their past and what they have to offer.

For example, there is Jordan Collins, who is with us today. Jordan stand up.

In December, 2014, he had just gotten out of OPP and got started with our NOLA FOR LIFE reentry program. It was a difficult time, but he had plans for a better future.

With hard work and our help, he finished college at UNO and is now working at the university. Plus, we're working to get him the required approvals to work offshore.

Congratulations on everything Jordan.

Jordan's example shows how important it is to have NOLA FOR LIFE attached at the hip to our overarching Economic Opportunity Strategy, which is all about jobs by creating new pathways to prosperity for everyone.

Another great example of this is Matthew Causey, who is with us today.

We just finished Season 11 of Midnight Basketball, which organizes Saturday tournaments in tough neighborhoods.

Matthew decided to play, but also told us he was looking for a job. We connected him to our people who hired him. Now he works for the Department of Parks and Parkways, doing a great job helping to keep the City beautiful.

Thank you Matthew.

We've also helped hundreds of local small businesses find loans or other needed support and launched a new intensive job readiness program called STRIVE.

Plus, we've already raised the minimum wage for city employees and contractors. Now, at the state level we are fighting to give everyone a much deserved raise.

So here it is in a nutshell – NOLA FOR LIFE is all about prevention, working in the community, focused on reducing group or gang violence//.

Our Economic Opportunity Strategy is about creating new pathways to prosperity for anyone willing to work hard.

This is our one, two punch against violence.

And we're also making dramatic changes through the police department. To make sure that we never have another Danziger tragedy, we have the NOPD consent decree, the most comprehensive police reform in American history.

The goal is to change the department's culture, insist on transparency with body cameras, retrain for community policing, hold everyone accountable, and grow the department so there are more high performing cops on the street and in our neighborhoods.

In fact, we have two classes in the academy right now and the new Class 176 starts in May, while Class 174 graduates on Friday.

Congratulations! Please stand and be recognized.

This is the future of NOPD.

This is what real systemic change looks like.

Unfortunately, earlier this month a new millage for hiring even more cops was narrowly defeated. Ironically, it was the same day as Will Smith's death. Afterwards, loud demands for more protection against violent criminals dominated the airwaves and social media.

But to demand more police protection one minute and the next vote down the money to pay for it doesn't add up.

You can't get more with less, you get less with less.

The other alternative is cutting recreation and job training. But that doesn't work either. To stop violent crime, we must invest in these sorts of prevention programs.

It is a zero sum game.

This is unfortunate because there is so much more to do. Unless unforeseen revenue is authorized by the State, or the people of New Orleans reconsider, we will not be able to grow the department this is a bad outcome.

Never the less, we're freeing up officers to focus on violent crime.

Already, we've moved dozens of officers from behind desks to the street and more overtime functionally adds nearly 100 officers to the force.

We also cracked down on properties with private security companies that repeatedly have false alarms. Fewer false alarms free up more police to combat violent crime.

Plus, we want to change state law so instead of waiting hours for a police officer to write a 5 sentence report on a fender bender, citizens would have the option to self-report the incident online or over the phone. That means more officers in the field, focused on violent crime.

In a similar vein, NOPD is taking more victim statements over the phone for nonviolent property crimes. That way if your bike is stolen you can just get on the phone to make a report. Thus far, we have saved and redirected over 1200 officer hours to violent crime and other high priority 911 calls.

But let me give you an uncomfortable truth, which is a basic fact.

Even with more police, which we need...we cannot just arrest or imprison our way out of our violence problems.

We've tried that. That alone doesn't work. That is made clear by the data.

We live in the most incarcerated city in the most incarcerated state in the most incarcerated country in the world.

And Louisiana's violent crime rate is consistently many times the national average.

Mass incarceration doesn't make us safer.

Plus, it costs us dearly.

In New Orleans, we've reduced our jail population from over 6,000 before the storm to 1600 today. So we are making progress and we just received \$1.5M from the Macarthur Foundation to reduce the prison population even more.

But there is so much more to do...

Now it is often said, 'guns don't kill people... people kill people'//but it is more true that 'people with guns kill people'... lots of people//.

When it comes to the Constitution, I believe that for every right there is a corresponding responsibility.

And I firmly believe there is a right to bear arms. But with that right they also have basic responsibilities to use guns safely.

So to that end, my administration has proposed a package of gun safety laws to be enacted at the local level focused on criminals and protecting our kids.

Our proposal includes new requirements to report lost or stolen guns, which is a major source of guns used by criminals.

We've also proposed local bans on guns without serial numbers, bans on guns at parks or playgrounds, and bans on gun ownership by people convicted of domestic battery, including those in same sex relationships, who are not currently covered by the state law.

However, on this issue of guns, we can only do so much at the local level.

The federal government and State Legislature must act to really make a dent in this big problem. But we have a moral obligation to take this on.

Obviously this is a lot, but there is some good news.

For as big as this problem is, there are solutions and we are in fact making some progress.

Here are some numbers.

Overall murder – down 61% from 424 murders in 1994 to 164 last year.

Murder per capita rate – down 50%.

Violent crime – also down a whopping 60% from 1994, with a similar fall in the rate.

So far this year, murder is down 33% percent. In fact, we are projected to be well below our 2014 murder number, which was already a historic 43 year low.

That said; let me be clear, one murder is too many. But our city is getting safer, although obviously there is a long way to go.

Citywide declines notwithstanding, African American men living in certain neighborhoods are still very much at risk.

Indeed, in New Orleans over 90% of our murder victims are African Americans and about 80% of the perpetrators knew the victim.

The question is – do we care? Because some people still think that black lives really do not matter.

But they are wrong, black lives do matter. All black lives, not just professional athletes, not just those shot by police officers, not just innocent kids, all black lives matter... period.

Especially those who we ignore – the thieves, the drug dealers, the so called ‘thugs’ - these lives matter, we all have value.

And if you want to be safe, all must have justice and equity. If you want peace of mind, we can’t leave anyone behind; we need everyone on board.

That is not just a slogan – it is a basic fact. Nothing happens in isolation. We each must do our part.

So let’s go down the list

At the federal level – we’ve already talked about common sense gun safety laws. But we also need more cops on the street.

We should remember that during the 1990s the federal government through the COPS program spent billions to pay the salaries for tens of thousands of local police officers.

But not anymore, that program has been gutted along with other public safety funding from the Department of Homeland Security. These cuts make us less safe.

The federal government needs to do their part. That means funding for substance abuse, mental health, and for more officers doing community policing on the street with trained, well supervised federal agents from ATF, DEA, US Marshalls, the FBI and more Assistant US Attorneys.

From there, the State needs to step up. For decades, Louisiana as a whole has been one of the most violent states in the Union and has more murder per capita than any other state.

So although New Orleans is no longer the nation’s murder capitol, Louisiana as a whole remains number one.

So the State must play a big role.

But sometimes it feels like the State hurts more than it helps.

For example, the State pulls in at least \$60 million in taxes per year from Harrahs. But that money is spent in other parts of the state and New Orleans gets little to nothing.

Here is another example; the \$160 million in annual tickets, parking and concessions sold at the Super Dome or Arena are exempt from sales taxes. So none of the money you spend there comes back to New Orleans for police protection, recreation or education.

And even though we are the ones working overtime getting everything ready, most of the sales tax and hotel-motel tax revenue coming from tourists attending Jazz Fest/Mardi Gras/French Quarter Fest/Zurich Classic/Essence goes to the State, not the city.

And to add insult to injury, not only is the State starving New Orleans of resources, but it is also defunding important state services like probation and parole, mental health, senior centers, the public defender and District Attorney. If they just let us keep the revenue we create we would be fine.

From there, locally we work closely with City Council on all these different issues.

Six years of balanced budgets and close collaboration on many many things - like the gun safety ordinance we introduced last week.

My special thanks to Councilmembers Williams and Gray for their leadership on that issue in particular and we have to do more.

For the business community – we all know about buy local, well I challenge you to hire local.

Give our young African American men a chance, especially young people during the summer.

Ban the box for all your job applicants and work with us on our reentry initiative.

Plus we need our business community/to help remove indefensible special interest tax exemptions for business and some nonprofits. No more loop holes. It isn't fair and prevents the city from having enough money to ensure the public safety that the people demand.

But, the greatest tool we have in our fight against violence in New Orleans is the collective power of all the people.

That power resides within us we just need to tap it.

We each need to activate our networks and find opportunities to help.

So when your church is planning their next service project – maybe suggest working with young people to teach conflict resolution.

When you are in the voting booth – vote to support public safety.

Donate to great organizations like the New Orleans Police and Justice Foundation and CrimeStoppers, who are helping us recruit more police officers and protecting witnesses.

And perhaps most importantly – show up.

Come to Midnight basketball and see why over 3300 young people from violent neighborhoods have come out to play and get connected to resources they need.

Join one of our Police Community Advisory Boards.

Show up to NOPD's COMSTAT meetings.

Organize your neighbors and watch out for one another.

Maybe even install a crime camera on your property that can get plugged into our overall system.

Or put in an application to join the NOPD – we are hiring. Get behind the badge.

Do something. Do anything you can to help, even in small ways.

We can see so many with us here today who are doing their part to make our city a better, more peaceful place:

One great example is Glenn Mueller, the regional CEO of RPM-Domino's Pizza.

When they lost two of their pizza delivery drivers to violence Glenn and one of his directors Mark didn't look for scapegoats or play the blame game. They didn't cut and run, they doubled down.

They put NOPD recruitment ads on every Domino's pizza box and became big supporters of Midnight Basketball. At every turn they have been there, ready to help with time, money and energy. Thank you so much Glenn, Mark and the entire RPM-Domino's Pizza team.

Another great example is Troi Bechet (TROY BAY-SHAY). She leads the Center for Restorative Approaches, which works in schools across the city helping young people with conflict resolution. This is so important as we try to change the culture of violence.

At the same time, here is our friend Max with Operation Spark. They are also working with kids around the city, teaching software development, preparing the next generation for the jobs of the future.

Many thanks to Troi, Max and their organizations.

Also here is Sherry Callaway, Executive Director of Limitless Vistas, which works with NOLA FOR LIFE on our reentry programs. She and her staff are changing lives and helping to keep our city safe.

I also want to recognize Jonathan Wilson and Patrick Anderson from 100 Black Men of New Orleans. They and other great leaders like Sonny Lee from Son of a Saint are helping to spearhead the NOLA FOR LIFE mentoring program.

And Jeremy Le is one of those volunteers.

Many thanks to you all and to the many NOLA FOR LIFE partners here today, especially those in the second, third and fourth rows. Thank you!

And finally there is Lt Jonette Williams.

As a member of the NOPD, she is organizing youth-police dialogues to break down barriers between the community and the police.

As she said, “We want our youth to see us beyond the uniform, to humanize us... we are here to help them.”

Lieutenant – thank you. Thank you for everything.

We each need to do our part. On the back of your program you will find the top ten things you can do to help. Or go to nolaforlife.org for more information about what you can do.

However, this is also about personal responsibility.

In some ways it is pretty simple. There would be less murder if people stopped shooting. And fewer young people would be struggling if they had support from strong families and parents.

Babies having babies just doesn't work. We need families raising children not teenagers and we all need to take care of our business.

There is no excuse. Quit waiting, start doing. We may not all be at fault, but we are all responsible.

This is real work, not the time for photo ops or hot passion that fades after a few hours.

We are in this for the long haul and we need each of to go back and get your family, friends, neighbors, colleagues and churches to help.

After Katrina, we pulled ourselves out of the water and in sorrow came together as one people.

And when the Saints won the Super Bowl we came together again, this time in utter joy.

In six years, we've made a lot of progress and we've had a lot of heart ache.

**Now, whether Saint or sinner, we are all a family and together we are working through our City's most difficult issues because great food, great music, festivals and football are not enough.
Whether Briana Allen, Will Smith, or Bryan Brastfield – all their lives matter.**

We must be able to hear each other, see each other, understand each other and feel each other.

Our greatest strength is our people and every one of them is an important part of our future. Lose one and we risk losing it all.

Together, we have to stop it, like we would stop ISIS, AL Qaeda, Ebola or any other threat to our life and the safety of our community.

We don't shy away from challenges. In fact we do the opposite. We run towards the fire.

We put a man on the moon for goodness sake. We can certainly figure out how to fix this problem.

Thank you very much.

Now I want to open up the floor for questions or comments.