

Boston Black clergy calls on faith community to make unified front against swelling gun violence



Stuart Cahill/Boston Herald

Rev. Gregory Groover speaks at a press conference on gun violence at the Historic Charles Street AME church Wednesday morning. (Stuart Cahill/Boston Herald)

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Boston clergy met to say that they had been “M.I.A. for 20 years” but now need to step up as a group to make the city take action on the swell of youth violence in the city.

“We have people in our community, parents and young people alike, who are deeply traumatized. And they’re feeling a sense of powerlessness,” said the Rev. Gregory Groover from the basement of his church, the Historic Charles Street A.M.E. Church in



Groover spoke following a weekly meeting of local clergy, community members and law enforcement called the Violence Reduction Task Force.

Crime statistics released Tuesday evening by the Boston Police Department showed that there had already been five fatal shootings in 2023, which is four more than during the same time last year. But those statistics only ran from Jan. 1 through Sunday, and there had already been two more fatal shootings since that data was released.

Factoring in the 17 non-fatal shootings for the year up to that date, that leaves 22 total victims — eight more than during the same point last year — across 18 total shooting incidents, which could have one or more victims. There were 10 shooting incidents during the same period in 2022.

In 2022, the [number of shooting victims dropped 8.1%](#) from the year before, though at 33 fatalities, there were eight more deaths. Both 2021, at 25 fatal shootings, and 2022, with 33 fatal shootings, were below the five-year average of 35.6 shooting deaths.

Groover said that he understands the data shows a decrease in gun-related fatalities over the past two years, but that “those numbers do not tell the whole story.”

“They do not communicate the terror that children feel in elementary schools ... when we reached an alarming and a senseless point of 13-year-olds intentionally being targeted and young women being stabbed,” he continued.

[Rev. Eugene Rivers III](#), speaking to the press following the meeting, said that the group is calling for “the mobilization of the faith communities” — and not just black community churches, he said, but all local faith groups — which he said has “been sort of M.I.A. (missing in action) for the last 20 years and not done the things we should have done.”

Both pastors spoke about the powerful relationship between the police and city administration in the 1990s, which Groover said created a national model for local outreach to quell violence and one to which the community needs to return.

Rivers compared public schools in Boston to the elite universities in and around the city, as well as government buildings. At those institutions, where violence is rare to strike, they have armed private security or police forces.

“Now, if the State House, if City Hall, Harvard, MIT and BU can have armed security forces where there is no crime, how in God’s name do you make the argument, therefore, that in the most violent neighborhoods, there should be no security? I don’t. It’s inexplicable.”



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Why won't the Reverends of Roxbury, demand that Ayanna Pressley become a champion for school choice, and give both her constituents children and the members of the Reverends flocks a sporting chance at a meaningful life? Otherwise, two days or two weeks from now, they'll be another similar occurrence. CDC reports, 19.1 of 100,000 Blacks are killed by guns and mostly by other blacks. 1.7 of 100,000 whites are killed by guns. The problem is in the Reverends parishes.

REPLY 1 0

Stop blaming the weapon. Weapons are only tools of the trade. If you had a gang of violent criminals in your neighborhood, and the police swept in and confiscated their guns, you'd still be left with a violent gang of criminals in your neighborhood. Worse yet, they would quickly rearm themselves anyway.

I notice one word conspicuously absent from this story: father. What percentage of violent offenders grew up without a good father? How many mothers bore their children just so they could marry the state (instead of the father) and go on to a life of welfare?

And finally, how can we be satisfied with the job our criminal justice system is doing? Our jailhouse doors are no more than revolving doors; check in, check out, go commit more crimes. We need stronger law enforcement, stiffer penalties and how about considering the return of capital punishment for the worst offenses?



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