

Civic Coalition to Save Lives

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June 2022

Pastor Carl Day is Bringing About Change

Pastor Carl Day saves lives by changing minds in the Allegheny West section of North Philadelphia and Kensington. Day is the founder of Culture Changing Christians and the program “Beat the Block,” a four-month personal and professional development curriculum he developed to help young men in his community transform their lives and overcome the challenges of an environment that foments violence, crime, and trauma.

Day profoundly understands what the men in “Beat the Block” are experiencing. Fifteen years ago, Day was in jail awaiting trial on a felony charge when he realized he had a spiritual calling to help young men like himself. “I was a product of my environment,” says Day. “Culture Changing Christians bridges the gap between church and the streets.” Day explains that the violence

committed by the young men with whom he works, primarily ages 18-25, is rooted in their feelings of being, “cast off and thrown away.”

He says “Beat the Block” is designed to fundamentally help them know and understand their inherent self-worth and value as individuals, regardless of their circumstances or personal history.

“We’re building better men and businessmen,” says Day. Angel Utsey, who grew up in Philadelphia’s Somerset section, learned about “Beat the Block” while he was serving a prison sentence for attempted murder.

After completing the intensive program Utsey is on track to obtaining a commercial driver’s license and has already established his own business, Halo Transportation Services, LLC. “I found my passion and purpose,” says Utsey.



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Participants are often referred to the program by individuals who have completed the program, and through recommendations from members of the community who have personal connections and positive influence within the community.

Led by two program directors whose personal experiences lend credibility and help build trust, the cohort of 20 men meets daily and requires participants to reach 13 benchmark milestones.

The connections established during the program also extend beyond its formal completion to provide lasting mentorship and a consistent framework of support and encouragement.

The first 30 days often include helping participants obtain the paperwork and identification needed for any job placement -- a photo i.d. and social security number. "If you grow up in an unstable living environment, important documents like a birth certificate or social security card are easily lost," explains Day. "A job fair is of no use if you don't have the required papers."

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A rigorous application process deeply investigates participants' relationships to identify any potentially dangerous interpersonal conflicts within the community.

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Day has cultivated relationships with hiring managers at local businesses to help place the participants in jobs where they work during and after the program. "The incentive to this program is the ability to earn a respectable wage," says Day, and guarantees an hourly rate of more than \$40 and a total of \$8,000 upon successful completion.

The investment over four months is proven highly successful and as Day points out, "saves lives and is far cheaper than prison." According to Day, of the 66 men who have completed "Beat the Block," 62 are gainfully employed and modeling the benefits of the program.

"Pastor Day gives these young men hope and dreams toward anything," said Estelle Richman, executive director of the Coalition and Special Advisor to the Managing Director for Gun Violence Intervention for the City of Philadelphia. "They feel valued, develop skills, earn a living wage, and can see a positive future."

In March of this year, the Civic Coalition to Save Lives, through a grant from founding member Comcast, donated computers to Christians Changing Culture to aid participants in applying for jobs. "Many of these guys don't have access to computers or the internet and it's much easier to apply for a job on a computer than a smartphone," says Day.



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Because of its highly focused attention on reducing gun violence through evidence-based intervention strategies, the Civic Coalition to Save Lives can quickly assess and address the needs of the organizations doing that specific type of work.

"Sometimes, a simple question like 'what would help you do this work more efficiently,' has a simple answer that will make a tremendous difference right now," says Richman.

[For more information about
Culture Changing Christians,
visit www.pastorcarlday.com.](http://www.pastorcarlday.com)