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Coney Island Residents, Leaders March in Local ‘Peace Walk’

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Respond to an Increasing Number of Violent Crimes

CONEY ISLAND — Responding to an increasing number of violent incidents — especially those involving the use of guns — in Coney Island, more than 200 community residents, elected officials and community and religious leaders marched in the Coney Island Coalition Against Violence’s “Peace Walk for a Better Coney Island” on Sunday, Aug. 15, 2010.

Congressman Jerrold Nadler, Father Patrick West (Our Lady of Solace Roman Catholic Church), Bishop Waylan Hobbs, Jr. (Coney Island Cathedral of Deliverance Christian Church, Inc.), Pastor Connis Mobley (United Community Baptist Church of Coney Island), Guardian Angels Founder Curtis Sliwa and Community Board 13 Chairman Eddie Mark walked with participants from 1718 Mermaid Ave. to the courtyard of 2950 West 35th St. Both locations were the sites of recent shootings.

Sadly, the site of the event’s kickoff — 1718 Mermaid Ave. — stands a short distance from where another of Coney Island’s latest shootings occurred — on Mermaid Avenue, near Our Lady of Solace Roman Catholic Church — in the early morning hours of Aug. 15.

“I am greatly concerned about the recent rise in violent crime in Coney Island, but we must not let it define this community,” said Congressman Nadler. “Those who have knowledge about the crimes must come forward, and we must address the root causes of the violence by continuing to work with law enforcement, residents, clergy, local organizations and other stakeholders to push for safer streets so that we send a message to those who would harm others that it will not be tolerated.”

Founded in December of 2009, by Mathylde Frontus, the Coney Island Coalition Against Violence is a coalition that possesses more than forty (40) coalition partners (individual and/or civic/religious organizations) throughout the community. The Coney Island Coalition Against Violence seeks to work with community residents, religious and community based organizations, elected officials, and law enforcement personnel to minimize the number of violent incidents in Coney Island. The coalition’s focus is to help coordinate anti-violence events throughout the community and to encourage everyone to work together rather than individually.

According to Frontus, who also serves as the coalition’s co-chair, “it was a pleasure to walk together with Coney Island residents and say “enough is enough” to all of the recent shootings and bloodshed in our community. I am distraught at all of the recent senseless murders and urge

our neighbors to lay down their guns.”

Coalition partner Brian Gotlieb joined fellow speakers in expressing his disappointment over the necessity of having to hold a “March for Peace.” Gotlieb, who has lived in Coney Island for the past 25 years, also urged participants to use the march as a springboard to future activities.

“It is not enough to come out and march for one day. We must work together every day to provide our children with alternatives to engaging in violence or simply hanging out. This includes being actively involved in the lives of our children; providing viable after school, job training and assistance programs; and, stressing getting ahead through one’s education rather than through violent means,” he said.

Community activist Jeff Lindor, who helped organize the event, said, “my wish is that there will not be another stop the violence rally, but a rally celebrating the achievements of students in Coney Island who have received a full academic scholarship to college.”

Coalition Board Member Marion Cleaver expressed her hope that the rally “will mark the beginning of a time when people can walk through their community without fear.”

According to Co-chair Hope Campbell, future events include the coalition’s Aug. 31 general meeting – to be held from 7 to 9 p.m. at the offices of You Gotta Believe!, 1728 Mermaid Ave. (entrance on West 19 Street), and an emergency town hall meeting that is in the process of being scheduled in conjunction with the New York City Police Department and Coney Island’s elected officials and religious leaders.