

WHITE HOUSE SENIOR STAFF HOST THE CONCERT ACROSS AMERICA TO END GUN VIOLENCE ORGANIZERS FOR DISCUSSION ON GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The Concert Across America to End Gun Violence Will Include 350 Events and over 1,000 Artists Nationwide on Sept. 25 Featuring Prominent Musicians such as Jackson Browne, Eddie Vedder, Rosanne Cash, Ryan Cabrera, Vy Higginsen's Gospel Choir of Harlem, Sam Harris, Kenny Loggins, Don Felder, the Gay Men's Choir of Los Angeles and Many More

September 23, 2016 (Washington, DC) – Organizers from the Concert Across America to End Gun Violence today met with Valerie Jarrett, senior advisor to President Barack Obama, and other White House Senior Staff to discuss gun violence prevention in the United States. Some of the meeting attendees included Natalie Quillian, Advisor to the Chief of Staff in the Office of the Chief of Staff, the White House, Michael Bosworth, Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Counsel to the President, the White House, Paulette Aniskoff, Director of the Office of Public Engagement, the White House, Bess Evans, Senior Associate Director in the Office of Public Engagement, the White House. Topics discussed among participants included gun violence prevention tactics including universal background checks for all gun sales, and other common sense solutions that make it harder for kids, criminals, the dangerously mentally ill and terrorists from accessing guns without detection.

The meeting took place ahead of the Concert Across America to End Gun Violence September 25 event series which will include 350 concerts across the country for a day of music to honor victims of gun violence. The grassroots organization of activists, artists, and communities of faith also hopes to use the concerts series to help educate and mobilize voters on gun violence prevention ahead of the November election.

“It’s a tremendous honor to be invited to the White House to celebrate the Concert Across America to End Gun Violence with the President’s special advisor, Valerie Jarrett, and senior staff,” said John Rosenthal, founder of Stop Handgun Violence in Boston, who is the national Chair of the Concert Across America and was present at the meeting. “Gun violence in America is a public health epidemic that results in more than 90 deaths and 200 injuries every day and we’re in agreement with the President that all Americans need to hold every elected official accountable and mobilize to make gun violence prevention a major voting issue in November.”

In addition to discussing important policy aspects of gun violence prevention, such as how urban Massachusetts has dramatically reduced gun deaths in the Commonwealth, organizers also gave White House staff a preview of the exciting line-up of concerts taking place across the country on Sunday. Hawaii, the state with the lowest gun death rate in the country as well as the President’s home state, will initiate the concert series with a special sunrise Hawaiian Aloha chant performed by the Prince Dance Theatre at the Kahilu Theatre at 12:01AM HST/6:01am EST.

Following Hawaii, musical events will take place over the course of the day at places of faith, historical theaters and other venues across the country.

Also in attendance at the White House, Eric Donnelly of the Alternate Routes, told Ms. Jarrett and others about the song he wrote about his parents that he will perform in Bridgeport, CT on Sunday. He released it this Father's Day and it is called "Somewhere in America."

Donnelly said: "It is not written for sympathy or remembrance. It is about empathy. It is inspired by the feelings of anger, sadness, hopelessness, and guilt I feel every time I hear of another life lost and family shattered by gun violence. My story is over a decade old, but new stories are occurring every single day."

Similarly, Annette Nance Holt shared her story with Ms. Jarrett about her son Blair Holt's death and how this experience inspired her to found an organization to address Chicago's escalating murder and gun violence rates as well as her role in organizing a concert in the city as part of The Concert Across America to End Gun Violence. While the concert itself is free, donations to Purpose Over Pain, which provides mentoring programs and helps to cover costs of funerals for gun violence victims, will be accepted.

"We hope our concert in Chicago will bring awareness to the growing number shootings and deaths through music and spoken word. We hope to empower communities, faith based leaders and legislators with action items that they can do to change this horrible epidemic and save our communities and our children," said Annette Nance-Holt, Chicago event organizer and cofounder of Purpose Over Pain.

Also in attendance Vy Higginsen, a Harlem based organizer whose choir will be performing at the Beacon Theatre in New York City. She said, "so many tears are shed by our teens over the loved ones they've lost to gun violence. Families and dreams are shattered by guns. We must, as a nation, stand together to eradicate this senseless and preventable public health crisis."

One of the lead organizers of the Concert Across America to End Gun Violence, Donna Dees was also in attendance. She is the founder of the Million Mom March on Mother's Day 2000, still the largest protest against gun violence in U.S. history with more than 750,000 participants marching on the National Mall in Washington, DC. Dees filed for the permit for the Mother's Day March following a shooting at a day-camp in Granada Hills, CA.

"Just as mothers rose up in 2000 to take a stand against gun violence in Washington, D.C., musicians and citizens across the country will rise up and band together on Sunday to make their voices heard and demand that elected officials take serious strides to end gun violence," said Dees.

Organizers also described the diversity of the Concert Across America to End Gun Violence movement. Bands range from the Police-Community Choir performing in Mesa, AZ, to The Wild Magnolias, a Mardi Gras Indian tribe in New Orleans to Cleveland's classical musicians who will pay tribute to gun violence victim John Lennon by opening with "Imagine" and closing with "All You Need Is Love." In Texas, venues range from churches to concert halls like Dan's Silverleaf in Denton, Lola's Trailer Park in Fort Worth, and Threadgill's in Austin where legendary Jimmy Dale Gilmore will perform.

In Missouri, singer Katie McGrath has organized a community concert in St. Louis, and a singing newspaper columnist in Kansas City has organized a concert at the Jazz Museum. Kansas organizers against campus carry will put on concerts with a variety of musicians including a college faculty band, Red State Blues Band.

Music genres for Sunday range from rap in San Francisco, classical in York, PA, Ann Arbor, Michigan and Danbury, CT, and rock and roll in Massachusetts, a state hosting over 20 events that day, including an open mic concert organized by two middle school teens in Gloucester, MA.

Joining Higginsen at the Beacon Theatre are Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam, Jackson Browne, Marc Cohn and Rosanne Cash. Rosanne Cash is a longtime gun violence prevention activist and one of the first artists to sign on to the Concert Across America as she did for the Million Mom March in 2000. Through her advocacy, Cash has met with dozens of mothers who have had their children ripped from their lives because of the easy access of guns to criminals and the mentally ill.

"The enormity of their loss is unbearable and all too easily forgotten," Cash said in a statement. "On Sunday we will drown out the hateful rhetoric that has become the hallmark of the gun debate with *music*, and create a positive national moment of collective remembrance, supported by action and a commitment to change. I believe our country is good enough and strong enough to eliminate senseless gun violence and prevent the destruction of one more family."

Marc Cohn, a gun violence survivor also released this statement: "I have experienced first-hand the terror and pain that gun violence can cause. The work of the Concert Across America to bring people together to end gun violence is so important to the future of our country."

Organizers told Jarrett, the day will conclude with a live stream starting at 10 PM, ET (7PM, PT) from the historic Arlington Theatre in Santa Barbara, CA including Christopher Cross, Rocky Dawuni, Zach Gill, Kenny Loggins, Michael McDonald, Ozomatli, and Venice. Also performing are Naked Voices Acapella from University California Santa Barbara. Inspired by President Obama's moving rendition of [Amazing Grace at Mother Emanuel's Memorial in June of 2015](#), Naked Voices lent their voices to put the grim statistics of gun violence in America to music.

For more information, visit www.ConcertAcrossAmerica.org.

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About the Concert Across America to End Gun Violence: This nationwide event will bring together a network of organizations, activists, and artists with the dual goals of keeping guns out of dangerous hands and making the issue of gun violence prevention top of mind for members of Congress, the presidential candidates, and the American people as they go to the polls in November 2016. Spearheaded by Stop Handgun Violence in Boston, more than 100 organizations have since signed on to support the effort including: Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence, States United to Prevent Gun Violence, Texas Musicians Against Gun Violence and

volunteers from Moms Demand Action and volunteers from the Brady Campaign's Million Mom March chapters. For more information, visit www.concertacrossamerica.org.

Stop Handgun Violence (SHV) is a Massachusetts--based non-profit organization committed to the prevention of gun violence through education, public awareness, effective law enforcement, and common- sense gun laws. SHV was founded by John Rosenthal, a gun owner and activist businessperson. SHV has been the lead advocate in urban industrial Massachusetts for enactment of some of the most effective gun violence prevention laws and of first-in-the-nation consumer protection regulations. Since 1994, gun deaths in the Commonwealth have been dramatically reduced without banning guns except military style assault weapons and large capacity ammunition magazines, the common weapons used in most mass shootings. The organization does not seek to restrict Constitutional rights but advocates only for common- sense legislation that will help save lives without infringing on the Second Amendment. For more information, go to www.stophandgunviolence.org.