



## **Prominent California-Central Valley Community Leader, Founder of *Concrete Development Inc.* Toni McNeil Joins Inaugural Cohort of Leaders in National Community Violence Intervention Program Led by The University of Chicago's CVI Leadership Academy**

*The national program will deploy millions in funding to support leadership training and data science research for community violence intervention leaders across the country who specialize in public safety, gun violence reduction and narrowing the racial disparity gap in underserved minority communities*

**STOCKTON, Calif. (September 5, 2023)** – [Concrete Development Inc.](#) ("CDI") today announced founder and Executive Director Toni McNeil has been accepted into the 2023 inaugural cohort for the [Community Violence Intervention Leadership Academy \(CVILA\)](#), a national training and leadership development program launched by The University of Chicago.

McNeil joins a group of approximately 25 community leaders from across the nation dedicated to reducing gun violence and racial disparities in underserved communities disproportionately occupied by Black and Brown minorities through intentional, data-driven and trauma-informed strategies derived from The University of Chicago's Community Violence Intervention (CVI) Academy. The six-month program kicks off in mid-September and participants will meet for week-long training sessions each month in one of three major cities – Chicago, New York City, and Oakland, Calif.

"I am both humbled and honored to stand out among over 150 applicants across the nation in joining the prestigious Community Violence Intervention Leadership Academy (CVILA) program," McNeil said. "This program will enhance the leadership capacity of a critical mass of CVI professionals across the United States, and will further strengthen my leadership prowess, arming me and Concrete Development Inc. with a wealth of strategic tools needed to lead effectively."

The CVILA program aims to be one of the most impactful public safety and community violence intervention initiatives offered in the United States. Data collection, analysis and behavioral science insights will inform the trainings and curricula, with the goal of having significant national impact that can be tracked and evaluated to assess real-time influence and success.

"Toni McNeil's acceptance into the University of Chicago's Community Violence Intervention Leadership Academy (CVILA) is a monumental achievement for both her and our beloved city of Stockton. This recognition underscores Toni's unwavering dedication to our community's well-being and her tireless efforts to combat the scourge of gun violence," said Lora Larson, Director of Stockton's Office of Violence Prevention. "As a partner in her initiatives through Concrete Development Inc., we're thrilled to witness her ascend to this prestigious platform. This acceptance not only amplifies Toni's influence but also shines a national spotlight on Stockton, affirming our collective commitment to fostering safety and resilience. Her presence in this select cohort reaffirms that lasting change starts right here in our streets and neighborhoods."

As the founder and Executive Director of Concrete Development Inc., McNeil provides leadership development and training to individuals within marginalized communities who have been system and/or justice impacted. She specializes in working with members of the community impacted by restorative justice issues that include gun violence reduction, principled policing, exposing and dismantling the prison industrial complex, as well as housing and homelessness. McNeil has served in the California Central Valley for more than 25 years and is a Stockton, California native.

McNeil adds, "By representing Stockton in this esteemed cohort, I am championing our city on the national stage. Shoulder-to-shoulder with visionary leaders from diverse corners of the country, all committed to breaking the cycle of gun violence in marginalized communities, I am resolute in our shared mission and excited to drive impactful change."

#### **About Concrete Development Inc. (CDI)**

Concrete Development Inc. (CDI) was founded on the mission to *Equip* system-impacted and marginalized individuals (the Concrete) with life-sustaining tools that *Empower* and *Educate* them to *Engage* in self-healing, self-development, and self-advocacy. Formerly known as *The Stockton Concrete Team*, composed of formerly incarcerated, inactive gang members who are system-impacted seeking to influence positive change within their communities, the group began meeting on a weekly basis in 2017 as a Local Organizing Committee under the umbrella of Faith in the Valley. CDI officially launched as a standalone entity with nonprofit status in January 2023. The organization is led by executive director and community advocate Toni McNeil, who has led restorative justice organizing efforts throughout the Central Valley, and for national and statewide networks, for over 10 years.

To learn more, visit [concretedev.org](https://concretedev.org)

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