



## **Stockton's *Concrete Development Inc. (CDI)* Founder Among 31 Leaders Recognized at White House Graduation Ceremony During Community Violence Awareness Week, Vice President Kamala Harris Gives Opening Remarks**

*CDI Founder and Executive Director Toni McNeil celebrated alongside 31 participants representing 21 U.S. cities for completing first-of-its-kind, six-month intensive Community Violence Intervention training through the University of Chicago's CVI Leadership Academy*

**STOCKTON, Ca. (February 9, 2024)** – Today [Concrete Development Inc.](#) ("CDI") announced founder and Executive Director Toni McNeil graduated from the inaugural [Community Violence Intervention Leadership Academy \(CVILA\)](#), a first-of-its-kind federally funded national training and leadership development program launched by The University of Chicago Crime Lab.

The historic event and graduation ceremony was hosted at the White House where Vice President Kamala Harris provided opening remarks. The graduation closed out a series of events this week led by the newly created *White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention* in an effort to bring increased awareness to the public safety crisis plaguing American cities.

Representing the community of Stockton and the broader California Central Valley, CDI's Toni McNeil joined the cohort of 31 community leaders dedicated to reducing gun violence and racial disparities in underserved communities back in September 2023. Over the course of six months, the group traveled to high-impact communities across the country participating in workshops, learning labs and training sessions with intentional, data-driven and trauma-informed strategies derived from The University of Chicago's Community Violence Intervention (CVI) Academy.

"I am honored to be a member of the first graduating cohort of the University of Chicago Crime Lab's Community Violence Intervention Leadership Academy (CVILA)," **McNeil said**. "This has been a life-changing experience that has unearthed countless resources and expanded my network of like-minded CVI leaders, arming me and Concrete Development Inc. with more strategic tools to continue our mission-driven work and to improve the City of Stockton's efforts to reduce gun violence and save lives."

"Toni McNeil's completion of 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."

The CVILA is the only management and leadership program in the country designed to help the next generation of CVI leaders strengthen their programs and scale their impact. As new federal funding from the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act reaches communities, the CVILA offers emerging leaders hands-on training on staff management and retention, data use, violence prevention and reduction, and community engagement – ensuring CVI programs turn new funding into on-the-ground impact. As part of the program, CVILA students participated in immersive learning labs in Chicago, New York, and Oakland that integrated their classroom experiences with community-based experiences.

"We celebrate the increased support for CVI from officials at all government levels, with a special thanks to the Biden-Harris Administration," said **CVILA Executive Director Dr. Chico Tillmon**. "Today's White House graduation, in partnership with the new Office of Gun Violence Prevention, highlights the critical need to address the persistent safety gap in our country and enhance public safety in communities of color across the nation. Thanks to CVILA's leadership education, our graduates are primed to roll out sustainable CVI solutions, paving the way for more secure, thriving communities."

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.

For more information about Concrete Development Inc., visit [concretedev.org](https://concretedev.org)

For more information about the CVILA, visit <https://crimelab.uchicago.edu/projects/community-violence-intervention-leadership-academy/>

### **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)

**Media Contact:**

Elizabeth Ng Mayberry

[elizabeth@concretedev.org](mailto:elizabeth@concretedev.org) | (209) 932-9230