Workshop 3B
Something Good in the Hood!

Moderator: Janice King-Dunbar, MSW, PHR, Administrative Officer, ACF Region X, Seattle, WA

Panelists: William Wubbenhorst, MBA, Non-resident Fellow, Institute for Studies of Religion, Brookeville, MD
Robert Woodson, MA, Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, Washington, D.C.
Omar Jahwar, Founder and CEO, Vision Regeneration, Inc., Dallas, TX

This workshop was an overview of the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, Violence-Free Zone (VFZ) Initiative. VFZ addresses violence in young adults through youth advisors who establish relationships with youth at risk. William Wubbenhorst discussed the VFZ strategy, which is getting to the “leaders” of the 10% of kids that are causing the problems and re-directing their energy to engage them in more productive activities. VFZ advisors walk the streets, greet students, attend tardy hall, meet students at lunch, walk the halls, and provide mediation. VFZ is demonstrating an impact in three primary areas: Improved safety within schools, increased attendance, and improved academic performance.

Bob Woodson told the story of a woman who invited 15 gang members into her home. Her family helped the gangs agree to a truce and the 48 annual deaths went down to two. Mr. Woodson stated, “We do not oppose gangs, we oppose the criminal behavior of gangs.” He talked of the role that gangs play in the life of a young adult who lacks one or both parents.

Omar Jahwar and Bob Woodson have instituted VFZ in eight different cities and addressed the concern: “How can you coexist without killing each other?” Mr. Jahwar spoke of the importance of who gets involved in this work. The work requires people who aren’t afraid of the terrain, who engage in youth culture, and who believe that young people desire to do good.