

## **If Violent Crime Is Truly a National Priority, Why Isn't Gun Violence?**

*By Renée Hall, Former Chief of Police, Dallas, and President, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)*

Another American community is grieving today.

This time it is Stockton, California, where families woke up to the kind of news no parent, no neighbor, and no city should ever have to endure. Sirens at night. Candles by morning. Another headline. Another vigil. And a community asking the same heartbreaking question we all keep asking.

### **When will this stop?**

As a former police chief of Dallas, Texas, and now as President of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), I have stood in the aftermath of shootings too many times. On sidewalks still stained with tragedy and in living rooms where grief was so heavy it muted the sound of words. I have seen children who can differentiate fireworks from gunshots before they can spell their own names.

I have also sat in policy rooms where national leaders declare that reducing violent crime is a top priority. And yet, gun violence is now the *leading cause of death* for American children and teens. It kills more officers in the line of duty than any other means. It devastates families in big cities, small towns, rural communities, and suburbs alike. And yet, the crisis continues to sit at the bottom of America's political to-do list.

We cannot continue saying we care about violent crime while ignoring the very weapon responsible for taking American lives faster than any other means of interpersonal violence. We cannot keep speaking boldly in front of cameras and shrinking behind politics when it is time to act. And we cannot keep asking communities to show resilience while refusing to show action.

If the United States is truly committed to reducing violent crime, then gun violence must be treated as a national priority, not a political inconvenience.

Because let us be clear:

- Law enforcement cannot solve this alone.
- Communities cannot solve this alone.
- And families cannot continue burying their children while leaders debate wording, jurisdiction, or election-year strategy.

To make meaningful progress, we need national courage—matched by national commitment. That requires several urgent steps:

- Federal leadership that strengthens, not weakens, our ability to keep communities safe.
- Policy rooted in public safety, not partisanship.

- Meaningful investment in violence interruption programs, mental and behavioral health resources, and youth opportunity.

NOBLE strongly recommends that, in addition to the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, Congress, the law enforcement profession, and communities across this nation work to secure the passage of bipartisan legislation that will at minimum:

- Mandate universal background checks
- Ban assault weapons
- Ban high-capacity magazines
- Mandate safe gun storage

These are not radical ideas, they are basic, widely supported public safety measures that can save lives, protect officers, and prevent the kind of mass trauma that is becoming far too routine in our country.

Gun violence is not a big-city problem. It is not a partisan problem. It is not a coastal problem. It is an American problem—one this country must finally decide is worth solving.

If we fail to act, Stockton will not be the last community to mourn. It will simply be the latest.

As leaders, we are called to protect, not perform. As a woman of faith, I am reminded that “*faith without works is dead.*” The work required now is urgent, unapologetic, and focused on saving lives, especially the lives of our children.

NOBLE stands ready to lead, ready to partner, and ready to push for solutions grounded in justice, accountability, and shared humanity. What we need now is for our national leadership to match that resolve.

Because if violent crime is truly a priority in America—**then America must start acting like it.**

#### *About the Author*

*Renée Hall, former Chief of Police in Dallas, Texas, now serves as President of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE). She works nationally to strengthen community trust, support officer wellness, and reimagine the future of fair and accountable policing. Hall can be reached at [renee@ureneehall.com](mailto:renee@ureneehall.com).*