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## Survey Finds Youth Overwhelmingly Support Look University Violence Reduction Initiative

Regional Congregations and Neighborhood Organizations' (RCNO) recent survey finds that Philadelphia's youth overwhelmingly support Look University, a unique initiative to reduce urban violence through creating entrepreneurial opportunities for youth.

Look University is a national project to harness music, film and internet power to promote alternatives to violence through youth empowerment. Young people will use digital technology to cultivate and promote their talent, intellect and creativity. Look will produce citizen journalism, music videos, a spoken word series, and web-a-sodes. The Initiative targets the top 20 media markets in the United States.

RCNO Training Center conducted the March, 2008 survey in an effort to ascertain the initiative's appeal to young people. RCNO's CEO, Eugene Williams expressed excitement about the findings. "These results are astounding. This is clear evidence of the viability of this unique approach to violence reduction and entrepreneurial opportunities for America's youth."

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**Introduction:** Regional Congregations and Neighborhood Organizations (RCNO) surveyed African American males between the ages of 12 and 21 to obtain preliminary feasibility and the acceptability of a national initiative to harness music, film and internet power. The initiative promotes alternatives to violence and empowers young people.

**Methods:** The Philadelphia Office of the Mayor, RCNO and Look University sponsored a symposium that focused on the best methods of promoting youth empowerment through creative mediums. The symposium included a legendary rap star and music producer MC Hammer presentation. Youth participants shared their empowerment ideas and opinions. Thirty one (31) youth respondents were asked to answer the survey questions using a Likert scale format (1=strongly agree; 2= moderately disagree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 4=moderately agree and 5=strongly agree).

**RESULTS: Youth responded to the following 10 questions:**

**Question 1-** I am motivated to participate in this project based on MC Hammer's explanation; **94%** of the youth moderately to strongly agreed.

**Question 2-** I am motivated to encourage my friends to participate in this Look University project; **90%** of the youth moderately to strongly agreed.

**Question 3-** I am willing to conduct a campaign on MySpace and Facebook to promote my work with Look University on this project; **71%** of the youth moderately to strongly agreed.

**Question 4-** This Look University project can be useful in helping to reduce violence in Philadelphia; **87%** of the youth moderately to strongly agreed.

**Question 5-** Young people will feel empowered if their project is shown on television and promoted on the radio; **81%** of the youth moderately to strongly agreed.

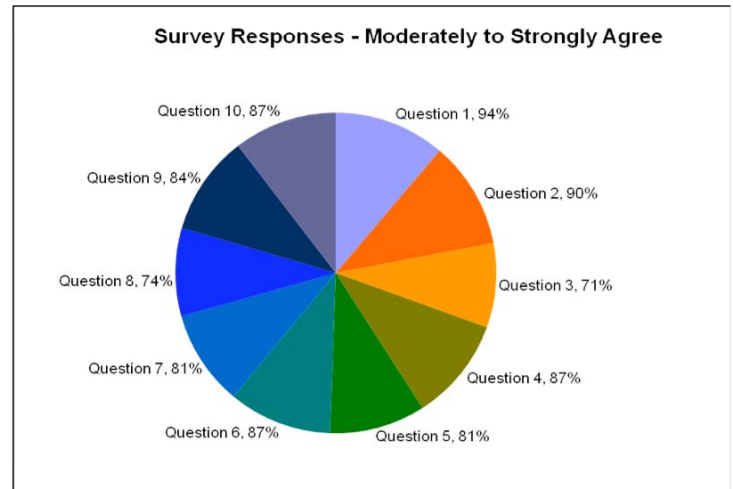
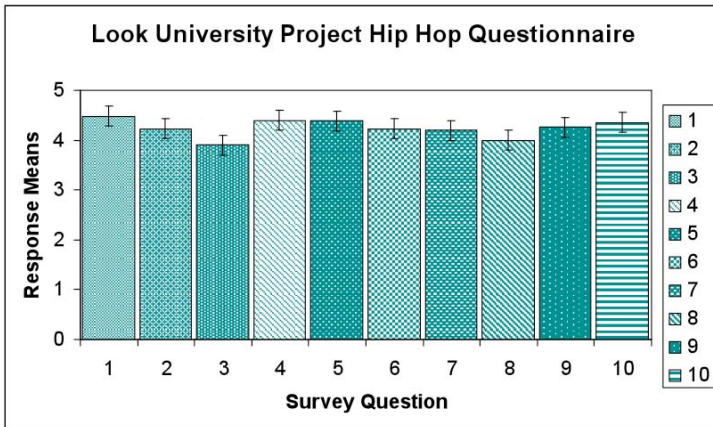
**Question 6-** Young people would watch a reality television show that highlighted their work with Look University; **87%** of the youth moderately to strongly agreed.

**Question 7-** If the mayor supports this Look University project, young people would feel that he cares about them; **81%** of the youth moderately to strongly agreed.

**Question 8-** If other elected officials supported this Look University project, young people would feel that they care about them; **74%** of the youth moderately to strongly agreed.

**Question 9-** If faith-based groups supported young people's efforts to promote anti-violence efforts through this Look University project, young people would feel that faith leaders care about them; **84%** of the youth moderately to strongly agreed.

**Question 10-** This project can improve communication and understanding between youth and adults; **87%** of the youth moderately to strongly agreed.



(1=strongly agree; 2= moderately disagree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 4=moderately agree and 5=strongly agree); N=31

**Discussion:** Participants were 31 predominately African American at-risk male youth (94%), ages 12 to 21 years (mean=14.3, SD= 2.6, median age =13).

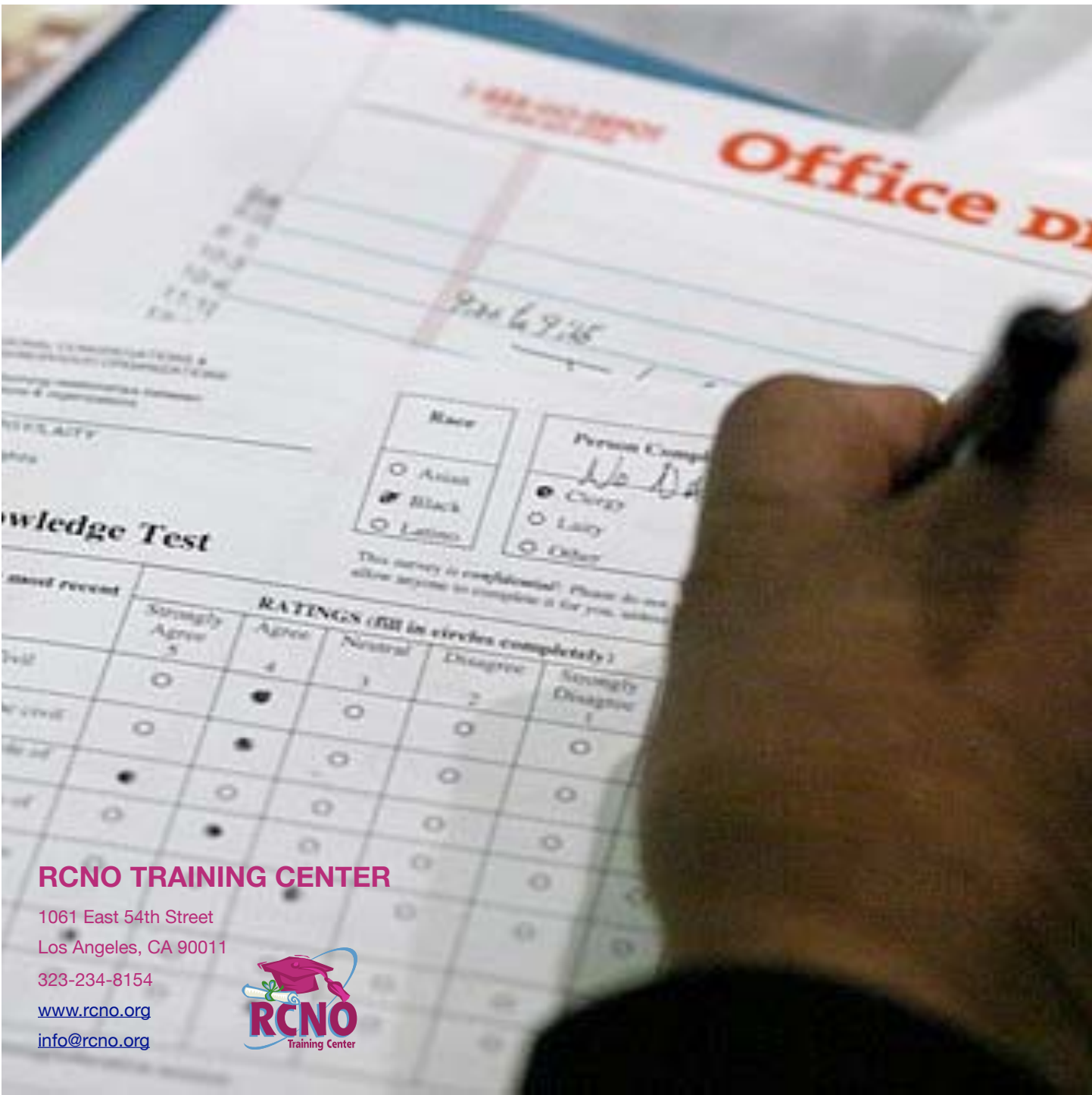
**Responses to survey questions were as follows:** (Q1) (mean= 4.5, SD= 1.0); Q2 (mean=4.2, SD= 0.9); Q3 (mean=3.9, SD=1.1); Q4 (mean=4.4, SD=1.0); Q5 (mean=4.4, SD=1.2); Q6 (mean=4.2, SD=1.1); Q7 (mean=4.2, SD=1.1); Q8 (mean=4.0, SD=1.0); Q9 (mean=4.3, SD=1.0); Q10 (mean=4.4, SD=0.9).

**Overall 84% of the youth moderately to strongly agreed with survey questions.**

**Findings:** These results indicate very strong support for the proposed project. The results strongly suggest that the proposed initiative has feasibility for the target audience. The sample is representative of the target population of this initiative.

The results of the survey imply that the national initiative proposed by RCNO and Look University will harness the power of music film and the internet to promote alternatives to violence while increasing youth empowerment would be acceptable to urban African American male youth.

These results further suggest that: (1) it is feasible to create platforms for and models of socially responsible messages for young people through music and film; and (2) it is possible to empower youth as part of positive social changes campaigns.



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