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Cleveland anti-crime initiative to show criminals' acts in community forum

Posted by [Jesse Tinsley/Plain Dealer Reporter](#) November 04, 2008 20:25PM
 Categories: [Crime](#), [Real Time News](#)

CLEVELAND -- Street corner drug dealers, gun peddlers and gang bangers could soon find themselves as stars on the big screen as part of a crime-fighting initiative that relies on shaming lawbreakers.

Cleveland police have been collecting intelligence -- such as surveillance videos -- which they may show during community meetings as part of Project Focus, an anti-crime initiative.

Project Focus, patterned after the successful [Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence](#) is unique because it gives residents and law enforcement authorities the opportunity to confront the criminals during community meetings known as call-ins.

It works this way: Police photograph and video-record criminals committing crimes like drug dealing or participating in gang activity. Then, police get their names. Next, police tell them of the evidence and invite them to a community meeting. They're told if they don't show up, the police will come and get them.

During the meeting, police present the evidence and get everybody to start talking. At that point those caught on camera get the chance to stop criminal activity or face arrest.

"The message is that the violence is going to stop," said Lt. Thomas Stacho, a spokesman for the Cleveland Police Department. "We have information about you -- we know who you are."

The video gives police enough "intelligence and information that we are going to be able to go out and snatch people off the street," Stacho said.

One meeting involving juveniles has already taken place in an informal setting at a church on Cleveland's West Side where those involved in criminal activity were warned of the evidence collected by police, Stacho said.

Future meetings involving adults may include video clips, Stacho said.

State Sen. Shirley Smith, from the 21st District, who recently hosted a meeting in Cleveland about CIRV, is crafting legislation to assure that CIRV and Project Focus get enough money to continue.

Cincinnati crime has dropped dramatically since CIRV was launched a year ago. Homicides dropped 24 percent from 2006 to 2007. And murders are down 61 percent so far this year.

Stacho and other police officials were impressed with Cincinnati's program, including the community meetings where the trouble makers are brought in via court order.

He said they looked shocked when they realized they had been caught on video -- in the act of a crime.

As the film played, the criminals, in shackles and jail suits, watched on in silence as they saw themselves indulging in gang activity, hand-to-hand drug sales and ditching guns.

"It was powerful," Stacho said. "And that's what we're striving for here."

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Posted by **Factsnlogic** on [11/04/08 at 9:04PM](#)

Wrong!

I wonder what the crackpot who thought this up was smoking.

Most of these thugs are repeat offenders who have been through the justice system time and again. Asking them politely to stop at a community meeting (assuming they show) is nothing but a sign of weakness. Worse, it reinforces their bad behavior (I can do what I want and get away with it).

Its real simple. If a criminal breaks the law, arrest them and prosecute!

This is just another program that wastes scarce public dollars with no measurable effect. Probably was dreamed up as a scam to employ someone's uncle or cousin.

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Posted by **pointnshoot** on [11/04/08 at 9:08PM](#)

FNL nailed it!

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Posted by **cleveslim** on [11/04/08 at 9:17PM](#)

a drug deal caught on video only is useless in court. was that crack you sold or a piece of paper? what is gang activity?

if this works than hey, go for it.

it would probably be something to watch in the hood on saturday night and laugh at!

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Posted by **2curious2** on [11/04/08 at 10:48PM](#)

Oh what a crock. If the cops get some criminal on video committing a crime and they're going to invite him to a meeting and give them a chance to quit the activity?

If the cops have the " ... intelligence and information that we are going to be able to go out and snatch people off the street," then they damn well better do it.

What's this crap about inviting them to meetings and giving them a chance to stop their criminal activity? You got the evidence .. prosecute and send them to jail.

Stacho is stupid and this "program" is going to be funded by our tax dollars ?? It's things like this that incite violence in the most peaceful of people. We need some prosecutors with balls and 'hang 'em high' judges.

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Posted by **spoonful** on [11/04/08 at 10:52PM](#)

I have to agree with factsnlogic on this one too. This is the dumbest thing I ever heard. "Stop your criminal acitivity or we'll arrest you". At least I got a good laugh tonight.

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Posted by **ChildOfTibet** on [11/04/08 at 10:57PM](#)

If anybody thinks for one minute that such a thing as shaming these low-life miscreat dredges of society are going to change just because they've been caught on a video tape they're crazier than a bed-bug.

Shaming lawbreakers like street corner drug dealers, gun peddlers and gang bangers ... what moron thought of this? I want some of what they've been smokin' so my senses can also be dulled.

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Posted by **tuckettAll** on [11/04/08 at 11:06PM](#)

Criminals engaging in gang activity, hand-to-hand drug sales and ditching guns.

How wonderful for society to know that the cops are watching them and not doing their job by bringing them immediately to justice.

Let's just take our time and send them invites to a meeting and talk to them. Those criminals are laughing their heads off at the stupidity of the criminal justice system.

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Posted by **Pseudo** on [11/04/08 at 11:15PM](#)

And while they're waiting for their invitation to the meeting they're still out there committing crimes and quite possibly going on to bigger things, like rape and murder.

There is no justice.

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Posted by **cbc9000** on [11/04/08 at 11:18PM](#)

It has worked in several other cities. How about doing some research before commenting?

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Posted by **Pseudo** on [11/05/08 at 12:01AM](#)

cbc9000 - do you believe everything you read? How do you know it's worked in other cities? What research did you personally do?

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Posted by **spoonful** on [11/05/08 at 12:41AM](#)

Have you never watched 48 hours- Cincinnati seems as bad as Cleveland.

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Posted by **JackRyanGOP** on [11/05/08 at 2:18AM](#)

I think we will see lots of these type of programs during the Obama administration.

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Posted by **AwesomeBetsy** on [11/05/08 at 3:24AM](#)

JackRyanGOP ... all of which will be failures and bad for America.

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Posted by **dogwonder** on [11/05/08 at 7:24AM](#)

This would work better focusing on cultural deficits. Videos of folks talking thick-ghetto talk, squabbling, spitting all over the sidewalks, and generally underperforming. This can be used to shame younger people into not taking pride in becoming negative stereotypes. positive examples and leadership are also needed.

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Posted by **tremonster** on [11/05/08 at 8:34AM](#)

Great, I bet there are video's in Ward 14th 2 notorious bars....CPD, try the filmage in court....nice try...not gonna work...oh by the way our

taxpayers are paying for this, I want to see the video's and make them, immediately, shown to the public. Remind me again? To Serve and Protect? I don't remember to Videograph!

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Posted by **11son** on [11/05/08 at 9:18AM](#)

HUH! "Those caught on camera get the chance to stop criminal activity or face arrest". The reason they were invited was because THEY DID commit a crime. Will they be polite and ax them to check their 9mm at the door? What a joke! I think the city and CPD have run out of answers,are desperate and grasping.Here's a wacky idea,how about a little military crackdown,curfews,checkpoints, the works for our little domestic terrorists. How much worse can it be for the innocent "hostages" in those areas? Desperate times,desperate measures

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Posted by **malticka** on [11/05/08 at 10:00AM](#)

All'z I's be wantin ta know iz dey gonna be servin up da Colt 45 and Black & Milds at this here meetin'?

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Posted by **cnnnick** on [11/05/08 at 11:33AM](#)

Okay first of all, how many people do you think will show up now that they know what it is? Not many if any.

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Posted by **PhatBass** on [11/05/08 at 1:19PM](#)

cleveslim ; You can go to jail for selling fake drugs however.

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Posted by **PhatBass** on [11/05/08 at 1:45PM](#)

malticka : Black & mild's = Mow mows.

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Posted by **Factsnlogic** on [11/05/08 at 8:08PM](#)

JR GOP absolutely correct. That is the man's sum total political talent. Squeezing tax dollars for "programs" that do nothing but funnel scarce tax dollars to bureaucrats who sit behind desks all day until you need to reach them by phone.

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Posted by **august1942** on [11/06/08 at 2:39PM](#)

I don't get the part about giving them a chance to quit their criminal behavior or face arrest. Please tell me how much sense that makes. If they are taped committing a crime, should not they be arrested and prosecuted for the crime(s) they already did? How is this concept going to reduce thug-ville?

I like the general concept of this initiative, but don't understand the above slap on the hand.

WOW..... SOMETHING IS WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE!

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Posted by **amrapwahoo** on [11/07/08 at 12:53PM](#)

The criminals will show up for the meetings

They are serving milk and cookies!

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Posted by **lassieccam** on [11/08/08 at 10:54AM](#)

I have been filming drug and gang activity for nearly 6 years. putting drug dealers on film while they work is effective especially when you film activity from a stationary spot. I have filmed plenty of drug sales, but I have also filmed rations delivered to drop sites, referred to as re-ups, as well as the delivery of kilo drug shipments and prescription pills, which really assists authorities. I encourage others who have to reside in drug infested neighborhoods to try the same thing because it aids law enforcement in determining who is distributing rations into an area without investigators having to question drug dealers. filming drug and gang activity also alerts law enforcement to changes in gang colors or clothing styles which provides links to other drug gangs across the country.

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