



# Reality Changers Need Statement

Since 2003, approximately 40% of Reality Changers students live within a single square block of where a homicide has occurred; 83% of Reality Changers students live within four blocks of where a homicide has occurred. Exacerbating the problem, less than 3% of adult residents hold a college diploma if they live in the locality where Reality Changers is headquartered.<sup>[1]</sup>

In 2008, Reality Changers moved to the San Diego neighborhood of City Heights, which the San Diego Union-Tribune once dubbed, "The Rotting Core of America's Finest City" (May 24, 1998). More than a decade after this local newspaper made such a remark, the San Diego Police Department's "Hot Spots" map still indicates City Heights as the "probation capital of San Diego," signifying that City Heights is the hub of gang activity and juvenile delinquency. That means the region's highest rates of gang involvement and gang violence (not to mention underage drinking, drug abuse, and truancy) are the most pressing issues in Reality Changers' locality and more prevalent than anywhere else in San Diego County.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Socioeconomic Mapping and Resource Topography system (Location 002201) uncovers that less than half of adult residents in this locality have finished high school and the rate of college graduates is less than 3% for all adults. Gang involvement and juvenile delinquency in the San Diego neighborhood of City Heights is exacerbated by how the majority of residents under the age of 18 in this locality live in poverty.

Furthermore, 78% of all residents speak a language other than English and 50% of all residents were born outside of the United States, suggesting that an extremely large proportion of parents and guardians may not possess adequate language skills or the cultural knowledge to help their children navigate out of the unsafe streets and towards paths that lead to and through the American university system.

These SMART statistics, along with the San Diego Police Department's probation statistics above, suggests that gun-wielding youths are more populous in City Heights than diploma-wielding adults. Such a dangerous problem calls for immediate action.

To demonstrate the size and scope of the problem, Reality Changers' neighborhood received a score of 10 (out of 10) on the Community Disadvantage Index, a summary of general socioeconomic conditions via U.S. Census figures which measures the percent of persons living below the poverty line, the percent of persons receiving public assistance, and the percent of families with minor children without a father figure.<sup>[2]</sup> The effect of this problem on the target population and larger community is evident: there is no more disadvantageous place in the United States for a child to grow up. More residents know how to drop out of school than to finish school; more residents have a greater understanding of the penal system than the university system. Indeed, to bluntly state the problem at present time, "street knowledge" is more readily available than "college knowledge."

As Reality Changers' students are predominantly of Hispanic heritage, a major problem facing this population is that only 9.5% of 25- to 29-year-old Hispanic students have completed a bachelor's degree compared to blacks at 18.7%, and whites at 34.3%. Furthermore, Hispanic adolescents make up 22.4 of the nation's high school dropout rate, the highest among ethnic group populations.<sup>[3]</sup> And although Latinos believe that education is important and vital to achieving the American Dream, few actually follow through with this to become college-educated members of society.<sup>[4]</sup> Yet San Diego County alone would save \$266 million if it could decrease its dropout rate by 50%. For California, decreasing the dropout rate by 50% statewide would save \$12 billion.<sup>[5]</sup> Therefore, Reality Changers' 97% high school graduation rate already saves millions of dollars in incarceration costs and creates millions of dollars in newfound productivity for the City of San Diego, the County of San Diego, and the State of California.

[1] <http://smart.gismapping.info/smart/Report-Output.aspx?ReportID=23150>

[2] <http://smart.gismapping.info/smart/Report-Output.aspx?ReportID=23150>

[3] U.S. Department of Education 2007. NCES 2007-064. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

[4] Sosa, L. (2002). The Unspoken Reasons for Hispanic Undereducation. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 1(1), 88-91.

[5] [Cdrp.ucsb.edu/dropouts/pubs\\_cityprofiles.htm](http://cdpr.ucsb.edu/dropouts/pubs_cityprofiles.htm) (San Diego)