As Baltimore recovers from the worst riots in decades, "Big Brothers Big Sisters of America" is providing the city's children with the opportunity to experience one-on-one relationships with volunteer mentors.

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Baltimore Program Gets Big Boost in Time of Need

PETER ALEXANDER, anchor:
Finally tonight, we return to Baltimore. The unrest there exposed that city's desperate need for role models for its young people. So many of them searching for both hope and direction. Trying to fill that void, hundreds of volunteers. Here's NBC's Ron Allen.

RON ALLEN, reporting:
Twelve-year-old Hassan Banks may not have to play alone much longer. And it's the riots in Baltimore that may help him achieve his dreams. What do you think you want to be when you grow up?

HASSAN BANKS: Aerodynamics engineer.

ALLEN: Why is that?

H. BANKS: Because there was a planes and like, engines and wires and all that stuff.

ALLEN: For nine months, he's been on the waiting list of Big Brother, Big Sister--the more than one hundred year old national mentoring network. Hassan's mom thinks a male role model could make a world of difference.

FATIMA BANKS (Hassan's Mother): For a young black male, there are just certain points of his life where I can't provide enough advice.

MAN: Got to go.

ALLEN: When Baltimore started burning, applications started pouring in to Big Brothers. The first few days, five hundred volunteers wanting to be so-called Bigs. Usually four or five call in, men like James Brown and John Maiden.

JAMES BROWN: I think that the-- the riots was really a lot of young people crying for help, and needing attention.

JOHN MAIDEN: Just seeing everything that was happening just touched me, and it made me want to do something for the community.

ALLEN: What do you think you accomplish?

TERRY HICKEY (Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Chesapeake): It's difficult to describe at some level. But what young people lack in their life is trust. By showing up, being reliable and listening, that's
how we're going to rebuild our neighborhoods.

ALLEN: Hassan is just one of six hundred kids in Baltimore on that waiting list.

F. BANKS: The ball.

ALLEN: He's staying positive.

H. BANKS: At a time you-- you're really excited. You never know who you're going to get. So you just got to wait.