

“Improving Gang Prevention and Intervention: Management and Accountability Issues in Gang Programs Today”

by

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there have been a number of examples of gang members working in gang prevention programs, where basically they were “gangbanging on the job”, something that should be taboo in the field of gang prevention/intervention and outreach work. There is value in systematically examining some of these examples of program corruption, fraud, and abuse towards the goal of discovering systematic patterns that appear in such cases that abuse the system of legitimate social services and the criminal justice system itself. One systematic pattern of abuse is explained in detail, the *gang contamination effect*.

By reviewing some of these recent examples that give gang prevention a “black eye”, we do the reverse of identifying “best practices”, we are identifying the worst practices: things to absolutely avoid if you plan to implement a gang prevention program in your jurisdiction. Or, if you are an analyst doing evaluation research, you will find a long list of things to look for if you are trying to identify program weakness areas. These cautionary issues can be of help in the development as well as management of gang prevention and intervention programs.

A GANG Prevention/Intervention/Outreach Program is Not Like a One Time Play, Presentation or Infomercial Event

A gang prevention, intervention, or outreach program must have continuity of purpose and sustained action, so it is not like a casual social encounter, or sermon, or speech that is not intended to be repeated in an ongoing way. A news release entitled “City Recreation Center to Host Special Anti-Gang Program for Local Young People” was posted June 18, 2010 from the City of Corpus Christi, Texas. It was a presentation by a motivational speaker focusing on the risks of gang life where the speaker would talk about some of his own life experiences to illustrate the trouble and tragedy that awaits people entering gang life. Upon closer reading, of course, it was scheduled to be held only once, on June 21, 2010 at the Joe Garza Recreation Center.

What’s wrong with that news release?

First of all, to do effective outreach to youths, you are going to need more than three days

to get any kind of message across even if you had access to all the bullhorns and mass media in the region. A couple weeks would be the minimum with a very serious and well articulated plan to market the offering to those who need to attend it.

Secondly, it is a program only in the artistic sense that some “engagement”, some “event” is transpiring at a local recreation center. But it is a hoax when it comes to what we really mean by gang prevention, intervention, or outreach programs. It is just a speech with no orientation and no follow-up. There are no services delivered to human beings other than the “information” those attending might acquire.

Thirdly, even if someone is going to offer this kind of event, then do not cheat the youths: plan it with the professional vigor you would have if you were planning to offer it to college-educated professionals. Make sure there is a curriculum, a list of goals and objectives, that there is a lot of useful but interesting “eye wash”, that there are also handouts, and most importantly that there is an evaluation function to ascertain and answer this question: did anyone learn anything, and what exactly did they learn? Does the “speech” or “entertainment event” or “presentation” objectively and materially increase or decrease something important and measureable such as “respect for the law”. If it decreases respect for the law, it should not be a part of any professional Gang Prevention, Intervention, or Outreach program. It should definitely increase respect for the law.

If it is just a seminar or “event” call it that, maybe bring the children and their parents together and call it a “gang prevention summit”. A “gang prevention summit” held in September, 2011 drew 500 fifth grade students from Orangeburg County, SC (Bellamy, 2011). It was held at the Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College, colleges and universities are good venues for such events. This kind of informational and educational event mixed musical entertainment with messages about alternatives to gangs. The sponsors included the Orangeburg Gang Intervention Council and the Children’s Law Center. Now if the same “message” was codified and repeated again and again over time in different jurisdictions, it might become a program similar to DARE or GREAT.

In some cities they just call it what it is a “gang awareness forum” (Flores 2011). The forum was open to all residents but had the specific purpose of focusing on the rights and responsibilities of parents with regard to the gang problem. This type of public meeting can also be useful for increasing the positive image of the local police, sheriff’s department, prosecutors office, etc. One thing you need to provide at any forum for parents is free child care at the event. These kind of events have enormous potential to galvanize residents and voters.

Towards a Definition of a Gang Prevention/Intervention Social Service Program

A gang prevention/intervention social service or treatment program can be defined as one that is prosocially administered by a legal entity such as a non-profit organization and may have different sources of funding to accountably deliver effective services having the goal of achieving a reduction in some aspect of the gang problem. We can now examine the separate components of this definition.

It is important to define a legitimate gang prevention-prevention-outreach-treatment program as being one that is “prosocially administered”. One of the clear purposes of the research being reported here is to demonstrate that over the years, clearly, there have been “anti-

social” indeed “criminal” ways of running a gang program. This will be explained in much greater detail shortly. Suffice it to say that sometimes it is just as easy to give a test to the program staff: get them to complete a “respect for the law” attitudinal scale, to quickly get a handle on the extent to which the program staff lean towards “legitimate or conventional society” or whether they lean towards a subculture. Staff with low levels of respect for the law are those most likely to engage in anti-social behavior. Staff with high levels of respect for the law tend to illustrate an important aspect of having the correct “moral compass” needed to run such a program.

When I speak to program staff, I can quickly test the waters in this regard to respect for the law by seeing if the staff identify with certain types of street language to describe law enforcement officers (pejorative or put down names), basically whether they believe most cops are corrupt or dishonest. The level of animosity towards police tends to have a direct correlation with the extent to which the staff are “prosocial” or “subcultural” oriented. A program should not be funded if it does not have the best interests of the community at heart — it needs to be prosocial. The staff need to be told which drummer they are marching to and this is the issue of proper program governance. One important and usually overlooked service outcome that a gang program can legitimately achieve is to increase respect for the law among members of the community.

A non-profit corporation with a 501-c(3) IRS status is the typical legal entity for a gang prevention-intervention program. This is the ideal model, because there are the expectations of formal accountability. A gang program that provides a yearly “annual report” of the activities, funding sources, expenditures, audit, statistics on input, process, and output, and summary of achievements in service delivery is one demonstrating the minimal norm of program accountability — the issue of transparency (what is really going on in the program from year to year). So that is the difference between a real gang program and a fictional gang program: the former accountably delivers social services, the latter operates more like a “personal hobby”.

Sometimes a larger umbrella organization is the ideal legal entity in which to establish a gang program. Like the YMCA — the worlds oldest gang prevention/intervention program according to Frederic Thrasher who was the sociologist who authored the first systematic social scientific study of gangs and is most well known for his book entitled *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago (Thrasher, 2000)*.

Most funding is provided by the government (federal, state, county, municipal, and tribal), although clearly foundations have been large benefactors to gang programs over the years, as well as donations from the corporate and private sector. It is not inconceivable that there could be for-profit programs, but for the most part these are non-profit entities. It is not necessary for a gang program to be funded by the government to achieve legitimacy and special social recognition by government agencies. Although, it is also clear that a gang program with enough political connections to get “ear mark” funding is also one with the kind of political clout that often translates into a special friendly status with government funding sources.

There have existed for-profit companies that sell a “program design” including curriculum material that can, for example, be readily implemented in a kind of “plug and play” format for public schools. Some of these have been very profitable enterprises. None of these really seem to spend much on evaluation research — the hallmark of program accountability.

There are some components that might be more appropriate than others for subcontracting to for-profit entities — tattoo removal or cover-up tattoo services for example.

Accountability relates to the goodness of fit in expending resources as effectively as possible towards the achievement of written program goals and objectives. In other words, does the program behave as it is structured and funded to behave and does it really accomplish service delivery goals and objectives. At another level, accountability means having confidence that the delivery of specialized social services to a specific population like gang members or youth at risk of gang membership is having the intended positive impact that is hypothesized in the analytical model of the program. Asking a program director “what types of process and outcome evaluation research have been undertaken and reported on for your program” is the way to separate the better programs from the struggling programs, because the more effective program is the one that has had the benefit of evaluation research.

A program that does what it says it plans to do in its action model is one with a high level of accountability in its service delivery process. A program whose services objectively have the kind of significant positive impact on the population served is one that has a high level of accountability in its program outcomes. Demonstrable results, with proven impact, is what we mean by program accountability. That comes from routine measurement of services delivered and a follow-up on their impact if any for the client population being served.

For decades, criminologists have known from research what types of services can indeed have a positive impact, and thus some social services based on a longstanding tradition of criminological research are justified for being on the menu of social services for gang prevention and intervention programs.

A detailed list is provided in Knox (2006, p. 625) showing the most popular types of service components in gang prevention and intervention programs.

THE PESSIMISM DOCTRINE IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE EVALUATION RESEARCH

The pessimism doctrine in criminal justice evaluation research is that “nothing works” to deter crime or to reform offenders or to treat delinquents. One of the main American intellectuals associated with this kind of ideology was Robert Martinson (1974) who advanced the viewpoint that “nothing works” in reforming American prison inmates. Martinson co-authored with Douglas Lipton and Judith Wilks (Lipton, Martinson, and Wilks, 1975) on the topic of correctional effectiveness and using a passive research design guaranteed to fail: they simply commented on previous real studies - - - other previous quantitative published research results. Doing actual secondary statistical analyses on those studies reviewed by Martinson, et al, might have been a useful strategy, but simply recanting the meager findings of the past was not really an effective way to advance knowledge on the topic.

Martinson had impeccable credentials at the time and these are accurately summarized by Wikipedia: born May 19, 1927 in Minneapolis; politically sophisticated - - - he was in the 1959 Berkeley, California mayoral race as the socialist candidate; he was a civil rights soldier by participating wholeheartedly in the Freedom Riders and was twice arrested in 1961, which earned him insight into corrections when he had to spend over a month in a local Mississippi jail; got his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, 1968; and went to become the chairperson of the Department of Sociology at City College of New York (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert>

Martinson).

Martinson in the 1970's gained press and television coverage for his pessimistic doctrine that "nothing works" in reforming criminals. In the mid-1970's he was featured in People Magazine and on Sunday's 60 Minutes program, very impressive media coverage for a person in academia.

What few seem to know the details about was the pivotal change event than happened on November 20, 1978 at a U.S. Department of Justice conference called the 2nd National Workshop on Criminal Justice Evaluation, held in Washington, DC. For it was on that day that Martinson actually recanted, fully if not completely. I know, I was there as one of the four presenters in the same workshop session, I was presenting on new evidence of post-release job placement services at reducing criminal justice costs using cost-benefit analysis methodology (Knox, 1978; Knox, 1981). I was speaker one, speakers two and three were not known me, but I knew who speaker four was - - - it was the reason there was standing room only in the large auditorium - - - it was a guy with what I recall was a loud unhappy voice named Robert Martinson.

I used my fifteen minutes to summarize what I thought were upbeat or encouraging findings about cost-savings in criminal justice talking about some findings from a comparative cost-benefit analysis of post-release employment programs in Illinois which would be published a couple years later (Knox, 1981). I reserved the last minute of my presentation to indirectly address and challenge Dr. Martinson because the debate that he stood for was worth challenging. It was an intellectual error, a scholarly mistake, a conceptual failure in criminology and sociology to assume "nothing works" in correctional treatment. When I stopped my presentation I also said a little silent prayer because I felt like the new kid on the block who was about to be attacked in the audience of mostly federal criminal justice agency personnel.

Then the other two presenters did their presentations, and Dr. Martinson begins to speak and opens up to the effect that he may have been premature in some of his previous conclusions and that today after doing more quantitative analysis of his own he wanted to say "opps....let me say this..I was wrong about "nothing works" because some things do work". There was a noticeably gasp in the large mostly law-enforcement and corrections agency audience members. And Dr. Martinson proceeded to "back track" from his 1974-1975 viewpoints.

I left there thinking God has just spared me from a floor fight or at least a confrontation of some kind. I had the distinct impression as well that Dr. Martinson wanted to come to grips with the extremist dimension of the "nothing works" ideology and revise his public perception to a more open and less pessimistic doctrine. I was just recent Ph.D. who was in the mix so I never knew what steps he may have taken to reclaim or reshape the public perception of his unique historical persona. It was not a nice label to have in most academic circles - - - Dr. Nothing Works Martinson - - - but it probably went well among practitioners in corrections and law enforcement.

The main reason we will never know is that on August 11, 1979 Robert Martinson exited from a 15th floor apartment building window in Manhattan. The cause of death was attributed to suicide.

EXAMPLE OF BAD PUBLIC RELATIONS COVERAGE FOR AN INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION PROGRAM SERVING OFFENDERS

Here is an example of the type of massive public relations negative coverage can look like. It is a standard type of “press release” from the United States Department of Justice.

“Founder and CEO of Non-Profit for Re-Entry Support Services Indicted on Drug Distribution Charges”

BOSTON, MA - - - The founder and CEO of Adapt & Evolve LLC, a Boston-based non-profit organization that purports to provide community re-entry support services, has been arrested and charged for allegedly distributing cocaine base (crack cocaine). According to court filings, the defendant has an extensive track-record of drug trafficking and other criminal conduct – including engaging in sex trafficking activity as well as a prior federal conviction for drug trafficking.

Javan Tooley, 36, of Dorchester and Brockton, Mass., was indicted on Sept. 18, 2025 by a federal grand jury for distribution of 28 grams or more of cocaine base. Tooley was arrested on Sept. 23, 2025 and, following an initial appearance in federal court in Boston, was ordered detained pending a hearing scheduled for Sept. 26, 2025 at 11:30 a.m.

In 2010, Tooley was convicted in U.S. District Court in Boston of distribution of cocaine, following a hand-to-hand sale of crack cocaine to undercover law enforcement. He was subsequently sentenced to five years in prison, followed by five years of supervised release for the conviction. According to court filings, following his release from federal prison in or around 2015, Tooley violated of the terms of supervised release on at least five separate occasions. As a result, Tooley was sentenced to serve approximately 22 additional months of incarceration.

Additionally, according to court filings, Tooley allegedly targeted and recruited women, many of whom suffered from substance abuse disorders, to engage in commercial sex for his financial benefit and to distribute controlled substances for him. It is alleged that Tooley targeted his victims with acts of violence and provided victims with access to drugs. It is also alleged that Tooley created a climate of fear among the victims by claiming that he had connections to law enforcement and other powerful and influential officials through his non-profit. Tooley also allegedly coordinated drug transactions using the non-profit’s phone.

It is alleged that on Sept. 10 2025, Tooley distributed 100 grams of crack cocaine near Fields Corner in Dorchester, just a short distance away from Tooley’s non-profit Adapt & Evolve. Tooley is alleged to have distributed the drugs in his car, while a young child – approximately six or seven years old – was in the back seat.

Following the transaction, Tooley allegedly contacted a cooperating witness again stating that he had additional crack cocaine to sell and arranged to meet again on Sept. 23, 2025, at an area near the Roxbury District Court. Tooley was taken into custody upon his arrival and allegedly found in possession of approximately 160 grams of crack cocaine.

Because of Tooley’s prior federal drug trafficking conviction, he faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and up to life in prison, at least eight years of supervised release and a fine of \$8 million. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

CAN A GANG PROGRAM BE VOLUNTARY OR INVOLUNTARY

There is more than a little controversy associated with the question of can a gang program be voluntary or involuntary. Obviously, most human social and psychological treatment models are predicated on the notion that persons needing that program will voluntarily seek out the program and its services. The client is the person who receives the services from the program. The issue is whether we need the cooperation of the client. Do clients have rights? Can we require any and all convicted persons to participate in a program or threaten to revoke their probation/parole if they do not cooperate? The answer gets less complex if we know that the court ordered such treatment. If the court orders program treatment — for example traffic offenders being sent to a short “traffic school” — then clearly they have to participate. The debate is of course going to center around can we succeed in “ordering” someone or compelling them into treatment?

So basically both possibilities exist: most normal human service delivery programs are voluntary, but there is some compulsion when the government has a “lever” it can use. Maybe it is the difference between eager clients and reluctant clients. Eager clients volunteer and seek out program services because of the existential choice of the individual to want and desire changes and particularly improvements in their life conditions. Reluctant clients are more like the bad drivers sitting in a court ordered traffic school, showing up and going through the motions, but their heart is not in it — and yet regardless they still may get something good out of it. From a helping profession point of view, though, it is always going to be harder to accomplish any program goals when the client is being compelled by the government to participate.

The Ceasefire Program that operated in Salinas, California and which is attributed with reducing gang shootings (Martinez, 2021) is one such example of a gang program using the “levers” of government control to order clients into a treatment setting. In the Ceasefire program the clients were on probation or parole and could be easily ordered to participate — or else. Or else possibly being a violation of the terms of their probation/parole and possibly the loss of freedom. These clients were gang members who might be capable of being involved in continuing gang violence. They would be forced to attend a meeting at a safe government location. At the meeting the program would use any and all volunteers, motivational speakers, and the like to urge the gang member clients to participate and learn in the meetings.

The federal government model uses the same gambit: compel attendance by persons at “call-ins” and then have a broad array of gang outreach service providers interact with them to offer a way out of gang life. It is kind of a carrot and stick: the carrot of social services and the stick of criminal justice enforcement. The theory is good: offer them new legitimate opportunities for educational and occupational advancement, a way to improve their condition in life, because some of them may be ready to seek a new direction. It is a way to send a message to the gang as well, because if there is an uptick in the level of conflict or tension in the community with regard to ongoing gang conflicts, when they attend these meetings they will always hear a variety of new threats about how they will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law if they use firearms.

What kind of message should be sent to a gang? In Kansas City, Missouri the police gang unit sent a consistent message to gangs and they called it the “risk for retaliation messaging”.

The message is sent to the gang through gang members and gang associates and their family members that in response to any gang violence they need to cooperate with investigators. And particularly if they are counseling a family that is a victim of gang violence tell them that they should not try to retaliate. “Do not escalate the crisis”, “do not take the law into your own hands”, “help us the professional investigator to prosecute the person that did this to your family” — these are good messages.

A positive message includes referrals for grief counseling and grief therapy. Grief counseling and grief therapy are vital and necessary service components of any gang prevention/intervention plan or any strategic plan for the abatement of gang violence.

Grief counseling is a professional human service that police officers need to make referrals for in this kind of context. When dealing with the victims of gang violence, there should always be a referral for grief counseling services to the victims loved ones and family members. All human beings go through the different stages of grief and handle it differently. The stages of grief include: denial, anger, bargaining, despair/depression, acceptance, and reconstruction. A gang homicide victim may need extended grief therapy from a professional grief therapist.

The credentials for becoming a grief counselor are different in all 50 states but rarely require licensure unless they are billing the government as a professional licensed counselor. Being a gang prevention counselor, similarly, could even make use of paraprofessionals — those without college degrees. But gang exit counselors and therapists are often degreed professionals with training in the helping professions. There are a variety of types of counseling that are found in gang programs: drug and substance abuse counseling, family counseling, employment counseling, grief counseling, exit counseling (leaving the gang/hate group/extremist group), anger management counseling, marriage/relationship counseling, financial counseling, and more.

HOLLYWOOD’S PORTRAYAL OF GANG PROGRAMS IN THE “THIS FOOL” MADE FOR TELEVISION COMEDY SERIES

There is an entire television series about a gang program located in Los Angeles called the “Hugs Not Thugs” program. This is a comedy series entitled “This Fool” where the ex-gang members bake and sell cup cakes to keep the program financially afloat. They wear pink aprons with the lettering “Hug Me”. There is a “group hug” every day as part of the program ritual for closing the daily “group discussion meeting” or group therapy. While it is just make believe, there is a resident psychologist who offers private therapy at the programs office location. This program serves a client population that is predominantly Mexican-American.

It is important to address the program name “Hugs Not Thugs” because it is a twist on a phrase used by those who are hyper-skeptical about any offender rehabilitation program. Those who work in the criminal justice system can sometimes in weaker moments be found using the phrase “hugs for thugs” to refer to any program that is offering aid or assistance to offenders. It is a highly pejorative phrase because it assumes the program clients are unworthy of support of any kind from the polity because of their past transgressions.

This comedy series has ten episodes which are about one half hour in length each. It shows a program executive director and founder who is left of center and who is some kind of minister with some kind of doctorate degree. The program founder struggles to keep the program

financially stable and is last seen living out of his car. Ultimately the program closes because funding fell through and the clients and staff walk away with chairs and furniture and anything not nailed down in the program building.

CHURCHES AND FAITH-BASED PSEUDO-PROGRAMS

Does calling it a gang program make it a gang program? Churches and faith-based efforts are often some of the biggest violators here when it comes to over-representing the scope and extent of program, program history, program accountability, program continuity, etc. Suffice it to say that the present author has encountered a large number of what are serious believers in their faith who mean well when they get involved in the gang problem, but often they are clueless as to what constitutes a real or genuine gang prevention /intervention program. If they just called it an informal ministry, it would more accurately represent a number of efforts to make outreach to gangs and troubled persons. But far too often we see fantastic claims on their websites which we know factually are little more than ideas that have yet to get off the ground.

It is fair to say that in the competitive arena of evangelistic faith-based efforts that overlap with gang prevention and gang intervention, that many of these “programs” are not genuine programs at all, they are pseudo-programs or quasi-programs. They could become a real program, but most are informal ministries that are looking for someone to step forward and lead. There are some very creative ideas and concepts in the faith-based Christian approaches. Some of those ideas are standard fare for juvenile delinquency prevention generally, often with a new twist or updated focus.

The danger here is that if someone took the position that we should abolish all government funding for gang prevention/intervention services because they compete and duplicate what is already being done in the private sector by faith-based initiatives, well, it would be easy to stack the deck of evidence to show that there exists an incredible array of “gang program services” offered through the faith-based community, just from what is listed on the internet. The danger is that it is just a mirage, it is smoke and mirrors. These “programs” often are nothing more than ideas with anyone to put them into action.

Faith-based quasi-programs do not need the formality of a traditional 501c(3) tax exempt not for profit corporation with governing board. Because of that, they can operate very informally, and do not typically issue an annual report as a genuine gang prevention program would be expected to do.

You might be a pseudo-program if your program has never issued an annual report. You might be a pseudo-program if the program staff consists of just you on your off-time, when you can get around to it, now and then. You might be a pseudo-program if there are no statistics compiled on social services you claim to have delivered to human beings. You might be a pseudo-program if no records exist for your programs social service delivery system. You might be a pseudo-program if you do not have a clearly specified catchment area. You are probably a pseudo-program if the claims of your success greatly exceed what you are actually capable of accomplishing.

There are well known and established full blown professional programs operated by faith-based groups. Recently, one of these experienced a new problem that has implications for other gang specialists working in the faith-based arena, it is the problem of can your program be denied

funding from the government if your program requires staff and volunteers to sign a statement of faith. It addresses the question: can a faith-based gang program have its government funding stopped for how it requires staff and volunteers to sign off on a statement of faith. The answer is yes, but stay tuned because the program has filed its own federal lawsuit against the State of Oregon officials involved.

That is what happened to a youth ministry in Medford, Oregon. The program, under the 71Five Ministries, was specifically a Youth Violence and Gang Prevention program. The program had already won the contract through a standard application or invitation to bid process, it was not new to this kind of work - - - the ministry had a sixty year history of service to the community. But in October, 2023 the program was told by the state funding source that even though they were scheduled to receive over \$400,000 in grant funding, that in fact, now, they will not be receiving any funding whatsoever. Zero funding. The award of \$400,000 was withdrawn by administrative fiat in October, 2023 because the state agency had determined that the program was disqualified to receive the \$400,000 in funding. The reason for the yanked funding was that the program required all staff and volunteers to sign a statement of faith.

You might have thought that the 71Five Ministries gang program was denied due process if it could not simply appeal the determination, or even accept an alternative way to comply with the new government contractual requirement that bans discrimination - - - allow the program the option to overcome the restriction by a new policy that no longer requires such a statement of faith from staff and volunteers for the period of the contract. It seems arbitrary and capricious to loose your program funding in such a manner. It would make more sense to have some kind of accommodation reached through dialogue between the funding agency and the program administrative staff.

EXAMPLE OF THE “PERSONAL HOBBY” MODEL OF GANG PROGRAM

This program came to my attention when a faculty member mentioned that someone at her church had a special ministry that had become a gang outreach program in response to a recent surge in violence in a certain American city. Seeking to learn more, I got a telephone number from the source and called to introduce myself. This program had a formal name, but it was an informal program, its hours of operation where basically whenever this one person had some extra free time they wanted to spend in the hood. There were no records. There was no funding source from the government, corporate sponsors, or private donors. It was a labor of love from one highly committed volunteer.

Were services being rendered? Possibly. It is quite possible that some good counseling could have been achieved, perhaps even some referrals to social service agencies, or referral for education/job training, or employment. You would never know, because it was basically just a personal hobby by a degreed professional who obviously had the financial ability to dabble in this kind of enterprise.

So, if you try to find this “program” by name on the internet, it is not showing up in any listings. You will not find it by calling 411. There are many of these small, mom or pop (rarely mom and pop which as a team concept would have a greater chance of success), gang volunteers that operate throughout the world today. This is the kind of program you only learn about by word of mouth. Although, clearly there did exist written outreach materials being distributed to

youths to recruit them, basically “props” for a program that was basically a social fiction, it could be called a true program only in its most embryonic stages of development. The best language to use might be “wannabe program”, “embryonic program”, “pre-accountable program” or maybe “emerging program” to describe it.

This has much importance when something goes wrong: assume the worst case scenario, a “tort” happens. A child goes out on a cultural enrichment event to a ballgame and gets injured at the game or in transit. Who does the parent sue when the medical bills are not paid for? When legal liability arises in the case of an injury or loss in connection with the “program”, who ultimately is responsible? In the case of a personal hobbyist, it becomes a personal liability, but there is no one other than the one person to actually turn to for help.

The main feature that stands out in the “personal hobby” model of a gang program is that usually one person runs the entire operation, it has no permanency, it has little formality, it has no legal entity, because it has no government funding it has no expectations or norms to live up to, no oversight exists, no board of directors to report to. When the person gets “tired”, they stop, the program disappears — that fast.

A program that emerges from a committee structure or a task force may therefore be much more likely to endure over time. This is true because it is not dependent on the tireless efforts of one dedicated volunteer. A group of people can act as a committee or consortium to gain the benefits of multiple viewpoints on solving the kinds of problems you will encounter in trying to establish a new program.

The level of commitment to the target community is often minimal for the personal hobbyist type of gang program, these are essentially “temporary” initiatives delivering an unknown level of social services, to an ill defined population, with no evidence of accountability in terms of program impact — the notion of whether or not the program, over time, has a beneficial impact on the community.

But it is also necessary to understand that while sometimes a real program may begin very informally, as it evolve and matures over time, it can be transformed into an effective formal program as well and there are many examples of this. It is basically the matter of having a noble beginning, starting off with little more than a hope and prayer of doing some good in the gang arena. We are not trying to diminish the status of a gang program or its staff by pointing out that some of the programs started very informally. It is also simply true that a mature and functioning professional program is not necessarily something that comes about as an ivory tower theoretical plan to save the city. Most programs today did not originate because of some government commission or task force that met in their jurisdiction, did a needs assessment, and worked with the social service industry to create the new entity.

CORRUPTION IN GANG PROGRAMS: THE EXAMPLE IN THE SOPRANOS SERIES

Originally airing on October 27, 2002, season 4, episode 7 of *The Sopranos* was entitled “Watching Too Much Television”. What it was about was a corrupt politician working with mob boss Tony Soprano in a HUD housing loan scam. The problem was one of the houses they bought to flip had squatters, it was being used as a crack house. Tony Soprano notices the house is occupied and goes to the corrupt politician to clear it out. So assemblyman Ronald Zellman asks the black activist Maurice Tiffin a big favor to help roust the squatters. Tiffin was on the

board of a gang outreach program, so Zellman asks him to hire some of the gang members to clear out the house.

What happens next is typical Hollywood heavy drama. Young black gang members attack the house with automatic weapons, shoot someone, and clean out the house in short measure.

Is it just a Hollywood movie, pure fiction? Or is it possible to socially engineer offenders in a private treatment program to do antisocial work like that portrayed in Season 4, Episode 7 of *The Sopranos*?

No one seems to really know. It has never been really studied. But it does provide another example of how our culture portrays gang life and in this case how easy it might be to hire gang members from a gang outreach program to do the dirty work of the New Jersey mob, at least in terms of the social fiction of this type of entertainment. If we are to believe the *Sopranos* example, it is easy for just a board member on a gang outreach program to get access to gang members and get them to perform violence for the corrupt persons involved in a housing scam. In actuality, of course, board members do not normally have regular ongoing client contact. It would have to be done with someone having direct contact with the gang member clients, and that was not a part of the *Soprano* story.

Board members deal with board issues, fund raising, capital campaigns, policy development, legal matters, and a host of business related issues. Board members of a gang treatment program would not normally be a part of the discussion or therapy groups, or one on one counseling sessions, or job coaching, or even educational upgrading where they might be useful as tutors. Board members of a gang program do not have that level of contact with gang clients.

THE GANG CONTAMINATION EFFECT

Client contamination is a potential problem for gang programs today. The *gang contamination effect* occurs when the program brings clients together from different backgrounds, representing different levels of severity in offending, and mixes “wannabe” or at-risk youths with hard-core gang members, resulting not infrequently in kids actually joining the gang in the context of a treatment or intervention/prevention program. Government agencies generally do not have sufficient knowledge to actually require programs to address the gang contamination issue, but that could change in the future as funding agencies become more educated about gang prevention/intervention. Client contamination could represent legal liabilities to a program and it is worth preventing through the division of clients into appropriate risk groups, such as Level 1 for not gangwise, Level 2 for gang associate, and Level 3 for gang member. These three risk groups should not be mixed in the routine delivery of social services.

The risk group levels need to be separated in a treatment milieu or the contamination effect can occur in a gang prevention/intervention program. If you do allow substantial social interaction and sustained relationships such as having them all in the same “GED prep class”, then the possibility exists that some of the youths at the lower end of the risk levels may actually be recruited into the gang subculture through the program that claims it is helping them. Parents of these children have just simply lacked the knowledge that they can sue these programs for the kind of reverse-intended effect: their child joins a gang inside a “gang prevention/intervention program”. Do not expect parents to remain ignorant on that issue forever. It is a liability, plain

and simple.

DIVERSION OF SPECIAL GANG FUNDING TO DO SOMETHING NOT SO SPECIAL

The diversion of grant funding is probably one of the most common abuses in social services generally, and it is of course true in the case of gang prevention/intervention funding. The case of East Spencer, NC Police Department shows some of the ideal-typical aspects of this type of abuse.

Basically, the Governor's Crime Commission in North Carolina gave \$540,000 in 2009 to the East Spencer Police Department to fight gangs. Did the Department hire gang specialists and create a new highly trained gang unit? No, but it did use the money to do something it wanted to do and needed to do, hire regular police officers. So the grant money paid for two police officers and the charge was that the grant covered regular patrol duties (Hardin, 2011).

A state auditor from the Office of the State Auditor examined the records of the East Spencer Police Department, discovered the misappropriation of funds. The original purpose of the grant was to fund the East Spencer Gang Prevention Project that would target kids 7 to 14 years of age. The police chief, Ron Hines, thought the grant could be used to buy regular police equipment or cover expenses the town could not usually afford. If any kids aged 7 to 14 joined a gang in East Spencer, NC from May 2009 to June 2011, those kids might not have fallen into the grip of gang influence if the police department had actually used the money to implement the program.

But is a police department really the best agency from which to operate a social services program, in particular a temporary one like that envisioned for the East Spencer Gang Prevention Project? Probably not. A YMCA or church or hospital would have been better choices, their work is oriented specifically to social services and they work with police anyhow. So the Governor's Crime Commission expected a police organization to be able to quickly learn new skills and techniques for direct service gang prevention to young juveniles, and the Governor's Commission was wrong in assuming the police department was the best agency to launch the new gang prevention service program.

After the diversion of funding was discovered, of course the police department is worried that it will have to repay the money, and that would have a very deleterious impact on their local budget for years to come. Rarely do such funding recipients actually have to repay the amount of their diverted funds. More often than not, the funding agency has a vested interest in keeping stories like this from ever surfacing in the news. It is more common that programs that abuse funding in this way become "black listed" afterwards and do not receive subsequent funds no matter how capable they may actually be.

Sometimes the more egregious the diversion the more likely it is that the story will never actually surface to the public. These are the examples of where special funding is diverted to do something especially bad. There was a gang intervention program in the 1990's in Minneapolis that hired active Vice Lords and used federal OJJDP funding to buy "beepers" for all of the gang members so they could "stay in touch with the program". Of course they were using the beepers to sell drugs and gang bang. But you would never know about that story unless you did what the NGCRC did years ago, FOIA the records directly from OJJDP.

For a modern example, while working as a violence interrupter in the Chicago CeaseFire

program, and featured in the widely viewed gang documentary called “The Interrupters”, Rodney “Hot Rod” Phillips - - - a Disciples Chicago gang leader - - - returned to prison for selling heroin, and it was revealed (Main, 2024) that the work phone provided to him from CeaseFire was in fact used in making drug deals.

CITY PROGRAMS CAN BE SUED BY PRIVATE CITIZENS OVER FISCAL MATTERS

The Minneapolis case here is a gang violence prevention program where a local concerned citizen sued the municipal government over suspicions of fiscal mismanagement (Mannix, 2024). In theory, anyone can sue including especially other bidders who applied for funding and who were denied funding. But this was just a case where the citizen wanted more transparency in the disclosure of expenditure information by the programs that seemed to have a sloppy audit trail. So the Minneapolis case asserted ongoing fraud and asked the court to appoint a special master over the city agency as a way to bring about greater fiscal accountability.

Minneapolis switched from the language of gang violence to call it “group violence”, so when city officials declared they were doing “group violence intervention” in a health model they were really just doing standard gang violence prevention/intervention work such as the use of violence interrupters. The sociolinguistic affectation did not improve operational effectiveness apparently.

THE GANG/DRUG DEVILS TRY TO GET INTO GOD’S GYM

A program called God’s Gym, in Elgin, Illinois, operated for years with private and city-funding as a gang prevention/intervention/outreach program. It featured a fully functioning “health club” for at-risk kids and gang members, including a boxing program. It was a place to get a work out, learn some boxing moves, get in shape. Apparently, for some years it was also a place to score drugs from the gang. In February, 2008, one of God’s Gym staff members, a gang intervention counselor, named Angel L. “Lefty” Vega, was indicted and arrested with ten others in a major drug trafficking investigation by the FBI.

It was a city funded program, so fortunately the city of Elgin got involved and basically took over the program and infrastructure, dropping the old name of the program, and renaming it the “East Side Gym” or the Elgin Recreation Center. The original co-founder of the God’s Gym program — Joel Perez — was fired in February, 2008 as a way for the City of Elgin to clean house and reorganize the program, but it is important to point out that Perez was not implicated in anyway in the federal investigation.

Vega plead guilty in February of 2009, he had been the subject of a 19 month FBI investigation. He had been on the Elgin payroll through the Parks and Recreation Department from 2000 until his arrest in 2008, but apparently he had been dealing drugs continuously during the same time frame (Ford, 2008).

The lesson to be learned here is clear. When there is a successful program that truly does attract a lot of at risk youths and young adults, there is also always lurking in the corners the threat of drug contamination. Drugs can be easily sold in a location that is tailored to at-risk youths like that of God’s Gym. People working in gang and drug prevention programs really need to be employed on a policy that is identical to police and others exposed to this kind of

subculture: random drug testing.

BOXING AS A CORE FOCUS OF A GANG PREVENTION/INTERVENTION PROGRAM

When we think of the value of wide-net programs like the YMCA/YWCA and the Boys and Girls Club we understand they are vital services to any community because they offer recreation to children and young adults. Boxing is a special sport and type of recreation and there are a number of examples over the years where the boxing program has also worked as a gang prevention and intervention program. A cage fighter program, martial arts program, mixed martial arts program, a boxing program — all have played a role or surfaced in discussions about gang prevention and gang intervention. Discipline and devotion to the sport is the focus of a typical boxing program, it would be a private boxing gym, and it would have a compassionate possibly even charismatic executive who is very knowledgeable about the profession of boxing.

We will review, briefly, a number of different examples of boxing programs to discover that some have special features, some have creative organizational settings, and almost all began with little more than the compassionate urge to want to do something about reducing the problem of gang violence. The founders typically did not wait until they won the lottery to start operations, they typically started out small, often in their own garage spaces. Most of the focus is on prevention in the programs identified here.

In Santa Ana, California a gang prevention boxing program was recently approved by the city council. The boxing program is called the TKO Youth Foundation and it will operate at the Jerome Community Center in Santa Ana, California (Pho, 2021). The TKO Youth Foundation was founded by John M. Raya and given a 501c3 non-profit corporate status in 2003. It has the specific goal of supporting the “ongoing development of youth-oriented alternatives to gang involvement” making it a gang prevention program.

In Chicago, one well known private boxing gym is also known for its work in gang prevention and intervention, it is the Crushers Club. It is headed up by Sally Hazelgrove who is a recipient of the Frederic Milton Thrasher Award for her accomplishments in gang prevention. Sally founded the Crushers Club in 2012 as a strong alternative to gangs in Chicago’s Englewood neighborhood on the south side and is hosted at the site of Beautiful Zion Baptist Church (www.crushersclub.org). The Crushers Club is not just about boxing, it makes outreach to the at-risk youth in the community by also offering an on-site music studio, and what it calls workforce leadership and mentoring. It is well known for its ability to achieve job placement results for youths in Chicago. The Crushers Club, therefore, provides an effective and responsible version of a “boxing program”; or more specifically a gang prevention/intervention program that includes boxing as one of its attractions.

Another boxing program in Chicago is called “Boxing Out Negativity” (www.boxingoutnegativity.org). It was started in 2009 by boxing coach Derek Brown, aka “Shotgun” a former leader of the Vice Lords, growing up on Chicago’s west side he joined a gang when he was 13 years old. In addition to boxing, it is involved in street outreach and community anti-violence events. So there is a real element of community organizing in this kind of program. It is part of the glue and the fabric of the community it serves — Chicago’s west side area.

Another amateur boxing program in Chicago is called the Celtic Boxing Club located on Chicago's southwest side of the city (www.celticboxing.com). The club is a neighborhood gym where young people can learn to box. It started in the garage of its founder Mike Joyce in 1993. Mike is a retired attorney who lives in the same neighborhood he serves. At their website, the founder clearly indicates that boxing in their program is used as a tool to help kids stay out of trouble. It is not just boxing as a pugilistic or fighting sport, it is specifically about the prosocial mentoring that the program provides.

The Chicago Youth Boxing Club (CYBC) operates out of the basement gym at the La Villita Community Church in Chicago's near southwest neighborhood called Little Village. The Little Village neighborhood has been a historical location of federal gang prevention research (e.g., the work of Dr. Irving Spergel from the University of Chicago). Millions in federal funding have been spent learning about gang prevention there. The CYBC program was founded by Gabriel Navarro who serves as the head boxing coach (Merchant, 2012). Mentoring is a big part of this program. The program attracts up to 75 active members age 8 and above (www.chicagoyouthboxingclub.org). Somewhat unique in this type of program, but very consistent with the overall goal of the program, it also offers academic tutoring in common subjects such as math, reading, and science.

A Chicago boxing program called "The Bloc" was founded in 2016 by Jamyle Cannon and is located in Chicago's west Humboldt Park neighborhood (www.theblocchicago.org). Keeping down program site costs, it is located in what used to be the sanctuary of the former church that closed called the Mission of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church. The program website is adamant in explaining it is not a boxing club, it uses the love of boxing to link needy at-risk youths to resources and opportunities that can make them better citizens and improve the community. For example, it uses satellite locations, actual Chicago public school buildings, to carry out after school programs at three different schools. Academic support services for inner city youths is a major focus of this program.

A common volunteer-staff model of a gang prevention boxing program situated in a municipal police department would be the boxing and martial arts programs in Garland, Texas (Ghirla, 2019). It is called the Garland Police 9th Street Gym. A youth can sign up for either the boxing alone or the martial arts alone, or even both. They are like two programs under one umbrella. A youth in the boxing program will spend six weeks in basic training and then later go on to advanced work once they are assigned to a coach. The karate or martial arts program operates independently but within the same umbrella of the Garland Police 9th Street Gym. The martial arts component is led by municipal Judge Bob Beasley. The boxing program is led by David Swavey, a retired police officer who wants to keep kids out of gangs. The boxing program component has over 25 years of experience serving Garland youths and is totally free. The karate program charges a nominal fee of \$10. Basically, the Garland model shows that with little cost a very useful and effective program can be established in any of America's 11,830 other municipal police departments or in any of the 3,167 county sheriff's departments nationwide.

The Double Punches Boxing Club (DPBC) in Santa Rosa, California was established in 1991 in the garage of its founder and head coach Richard Lopez. The beauty of this program model is seen in how keeping it simple is a great way to start up a new gang prevention program and it shows the way you can plant the seed of an idea and watch it grow and flourish over time.

If you have a leader or volunteer coach who is energetic and charismatic all they need to do is start working. In 1996 the DPBC went formal in its identity and became a 501 c 3 non profit corporation in 1997. It persevered in serving the community and linked up with the Salvation Army. The DPBC was formally integrated into the Salvation Army in 2010. The club has about 40 students age 8-24. There are two student tracks: (1) adults and advanced class (16-34 years of age), (2) youth class (10 - 17 years of age). Classes last for a year. Boxers need to pay a \$64 annual fee to register with USA Boxing before they are allowed to spar in the ring. Like other boxing programs it includes mentoring and tutoring services (www.santarosa.salvationarmy.org).

The Capetillo Boxing Academy (CBA) is described as haven against gang violence and operates in East Los Angeles, California (www.capetillo-boxing-academy.business.site). Its founder knows a lot about gang life having grown up in a gang epicenter. He had been shot three different times. The CBA was founded in 2016 by Javier Capetillo Jr. There is a James Capetillo Sr., and he is known for having trained ten world boxing champions in his lifetime. So clearly there is a legacy of successful boxing training in the family history. The CBA is based on finding out the strengths of the clients and working to hone and refine those strengths in the world of boxing. As a private program, the CBA does charge a small fee for providing a safe place to avoid gang life.

While the above examples of boxing programs are focused mainly on gang prevention or the primary level of gang prevention, there was a study that focused on a boxing treatment program in the suburbs of Copenhagen, Denmark that was clearly classified as gang intervention because it was a qualitative study of N = 22 young Danish gang members (Deuchar, et al, 2015). The study focused on how having a safe place to explore a masculine sport was beneficial for the clients to desist from a criminal gang lifestyle. It may very well have been the socialization experiences in mediating conflict, having to take responsibility for their actions, learning to improve their self-discipline — the things commonly learned in a boxing program — that allowed the authors to conclude it is a legitimate option for dealing with the gang problem even at the tertiary level.

Basically, boxing or mixed martial arts can be the axial principle around which gang prevention services are delivered — it is obvious that the boxing is what attracts the clients. But then the clients discover there are more services than just pugilistics — more than fighting skills — these programs typically also offer a variety of mentoring and educational assistance services — after school programs, tutoring, homework help — things that kids need. The good programs are really trying to improve both the body and the mind or the whole person.

GOVERNMENT PAID GANG PEACEKEEPER WON'T COOPERATE WITH POLICE

This program fails the “respect for the law test”, and as rule of thumb in the field of criminology, a program needs to promote respect for the law. A gang program cannot be a “cop hater” program or one that systematically erodes respect for the law generally (respect for police, corrections personnel, court personnel, judges, etc). A gang program, to be “pro-social”, must promote a healthy respect for the law, and it should not tolerate “hate” of any kind, including the kind of “cop hater” philosophy that is embedded in the “stop snitching” ideology promoted by American gangs.

The “respect for the law” test is basically the concept that when someone “hates” and acts

on that hatred toward the “legal system”, basically they are showing an attitude, a psychological and cultural predisposition to just fight the status quo. The fact remains: a measure of respect for the law is also indicating, in its absence, an affinity for and thus often a surrogate measure showing a higher respect for gang identification.

As described in the media (Dreirer and Fischer, 2011), rival gang members had a bloody brawl right in offices of the “gang peacekeeper program” inside City Hall itself. This happened in Richmond, California, in October, 2011, on the third floor of the city hall, inside the office that houses the city’s gang intervention program, officially known as the Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS). Apparently, according to media reports that turns out are better than police reports (because the ONS program staff did not want to cooperate with any police investigation) in this instance, about ten gang members were involved in the fight inside City Hall.

Charles Muhammad is a Peacekeeper employed by the ONS and remarked to the local media that they could not cooperate with a police investigation into the riot because that might erode the trust that the ONS program tries to establish with gang members in the City of Richmond.

Subsequent media coverage used the angle that “hey, fist fights is great, they are normally wanting to shoot each other....it might be a program accomplishment when considering the level of violence could have meant having a shoot out in the city hall parking lot between the rival gangs”. We need to point out that any of those “clients” of the program that were assaulted and suffered damage while attending the program inside City Hall, could easily sue the City of Richmond for having a program loaded with legal liabilities, it is apparently more than a failure to protect issue.

What is the moral to this lesson? Watch what you do when you are handing out checks to gang member program clients, you may not want to do it alphabetically by name, you may find some strategic safety advantage in having Crips pick up their checks on Thursday and Bloods pick up their checks on Friday. It might pay to separate them from being able to push and shove or fight in the same line.

A Unique Type of Training for Gang Adjacent Persons

The “Independent Forensic Gang Expert College (IFGEC)” trains gang involved and gang adjacent persons to help with criminal defense court cases. It was founded in 2020 by a law professor and is based at the law school of Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, CA. The term “gang adjacent” could include what is traditionally meant by former or ex-gang members, or gang associates, or persons in a family structure that has a significant gang history, or persons with a close connection to gang members, and even persons who defend the public image of gangs out of a resentment towards law enforcement. The term gang-involved is not much less ambiguous, but could mean active gang members and former gang members, even what is called “inactive” gang members. It is very important in any kind of professional training involved with the gang issue to clarify our language in this regard as a matter of basic accountability.

The term “college” in IFGEC is more of a heuristic device as it is not recognized as a college or university degree granting institutional program similar to sociology, psychology, or the law school itself. It is a program operated within the law school and it is not known what

kind of “completion certificate” one might get from completing the training.

IFGEC provides gang training in a university setting in California. Thus, it is a kind of gang training program. The training at the NGCRC covers areas like: Gang Counseling, Gang Victims, Gang Intervention, Gangs and Mental Health, Gang Outreach, Gang Problems in K-12 Schools, and Gang Prevention. It is not known exactly what the IFGEC training curriculum consists of and what life skills are developed in the trainees.

An important IFGEC goal is to contextualize a person’s gang involvement to a jury or judge in criminal court testimony. In most states it may already be common to allow criminal defendants the right to have their own “private pre-sentence investigation (PSI)” and this is a known mechanism historically to allow a defense attorney to achieve mitigation. There are a lot of gang experts who are not police officers. Many are in adjacent fields of criminal justice such as probation and corrections, or basic social service administration, or a related field of expertise, such as psychology, sociology, etc.

A gang mitigation expert would be able to speak to the subtle nuances of what it means to be gang-involved. They would be able to explain how being in a gang is similar or different from being in a cult or the military, where they might be subjected to some kind of brain washing. Someone who has “lived the life” of being in a gang would be able to offer unique insights into gang life and this kind of human learning must surely be regarded as useful in gang outreach, gang mediation, gang conflict resolution, gang abatement, gang prevention, and gang violence prevention and intervention.

We all recognize the value of “been there, done that” as a communications advantage, and so certainly a gang mitigation expert would have this rare ability to communicate with and interview other gang-adjacent persons. The one exception would be where the gang-experts themselves might have lingering influences from gang life - - - such as the hypothesis about lifelong gang rivalry. A lifelong gang rivalry is one where it lasts beyond the time period of actual gang membership, the person may leave the gang life, but they do not necessarily leave all of gang culture behind. They may even continue to have, to an unknown extent as no one is researching this issue, conflict conditions or some level of personal enmity towards their rival gangs. So if you grew up as a Crip, can you possibly harbor continuing implicit bias towards a Blood defendant?

It would seem vital for training gang-adjacent persons to know all the factors in mitigation for a gang-adjacent defendant. So a professional gang training curriculum is going to be one that certainly includes both factors in aggravation and factors in mitigation in gang cases. If most gang training venues are using only prosecutors, they are providing a point of view that is different from public defenders or private criminal defense attorneys would offer. Public defenders and criminal defense attorneys must be expected to know more about factors in mitigation.

BLOODS GANG IN NASHVILLE OPERATES ITS OWN GANG PREVENTION PROGRAM

In June of 2010, in a massive gang investigation of the Bloods in Nashville, two workers were arrested who worked for the Galaxy Star Drug Awareness and Gang Prevention Center. The two arrested were the co-founder of the program Lonnie Greenlee and a youth coordinator

named Rodney Britton. According to the federal indictment, the Galaxy program work site was a place for gang meetings to plot killings, drive-bys, and illegal drug distribution. Obviously, the program was actually in the business of “gang retaliation”, because as the Bloods controlled the Galaxy program, any Crips or Crip-affiliated members (e.g., Gangster Disciples are often affiliated with Crips) would find themselves entering this “program” and potentially becoming a victim. As active Blood gang members worked at the Galaxy program. So as a program it was “gang prevention” only in name, in function it was “gang expansion” for one specific gang — the Bloods. But if you were in the Bloods gang, and had court-ordered community service, this was a sweet deal; because the two program staff arrested are also accused of supplying gang members with fabricated documents for court-ordered community service, sometimes in exchange for money.

In June or 2010, a total of 26 Bloods were indicted by a federal grand jury in Nashville for offenses such as racketeering and murder, directly related to the program operated by the gang.

In November of 2010, Rodney Britton was also indicted in state court for rape involving a juvenile boy. Britton wanted the 15 year old boy, who had been in trouble and came to the program for help, to do his community service with him, including sleep overs at his Britton’s home where allegedly the boy was forced to perform sex acts (Echegaray, 2010). In February, 2011, six other Bloods gang members from this program were also indicted on charges ranging from racketeering to murder.

On May 31st, 2011 Lonnie Greenlee pleaded guilty to federal racketeering charges. He admitted to being both a Bloods gang member and helping the Bloods gang, including using the program offices for gang activities. Some of those gang activities included meeting with the local Gangster Disciples, a rival gang, and putting the names of prosecutors on the dry erase board and proclaiming that there would be a \$75,000 reward if any of the prosecutors were killed.

Antonio Washington (aka “T.O.”) was sentenced in September, 2011 to eight years in federal prison plus five years supervision afterwards for his role in the gang-run program, he had pleaded guilty to racketeering conspiracy in June, 2011.

HAVING FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES: The King of Kings Program in Queens, NY

Let’s assume you have no degrees in social services, you have a recent rap sheet, you do not really have a fully functioning program of any kind, you may not even know what evaluation research and an annual report really consists of, you do not have any experience or a track record, but you want to get a quarter to half a million dollars in funding a year from the federal government. Well, this is America, all you need are friends in high places. Just examine the story of the King of Kings Program.

In 2010, Federal funding provided to the State of New York for the sole purpose to support an anti-gang initiative was diverted by the State Assembly to support pet projects. One of these was the King of Kings Foundation, which claimed to be an anti-drug and anti-gang program. The primary function of the program was to have the two staff of the program give anti-gang and anti-drug speeches in and around Queens. The two staff had lots of street cred on the drug issue because they were brothers who had been convicted of running a drug operation.

They are Lance and Todd Feurtado and when their drug operation was busted in 1995, they were both convicted in federal court and went to prison with terms of 7 to 15 years (Lesser and Smith, 2010).

In 2002 Todd was released from prison, Lance followed in 2004, and they formed a company called Executive Star Productions in 2005 producing a DVD about their life and how they were framed by the Department of Justice (ibid). In 2006 they formed the King of Kings Foundation as a nonprofit corporation (ibid).

According to the media story, the brothers did not even have to apply for the money, it was NY Sensate President Malcolm Smith (D-Queens) who contacted them, seeking to award the program \$290,000 in unsolicited funding in February of 2010 (ibid). By April of 2010, Malcolm Smith was seeking to award an additional \$500,000 to the brothers (Blain, 2010a).

The NY Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) did have suspicions and warned against giving the half million to an unknown group with no track record of program effectiveness in gang prevention services, John Caher of the DCJS remarked “they didn’t have any experience and they didn’t have a track record” (Blain, 2010b). As of November 2010, the program has not gotten the money, so Smith was seeking the deal to bring in another group in the same community to be the fiscal manager of the program funding as a way to overcome the objections against the King of Kings Program.

BALTIMORE GANG OUTREACH CENTER WAS REALLY A FRONT FOR DRUG SALES BY THE BLACK GUERRILLA FAMILY

Communities Organized to Improve Life, Inc (COIL) was the name of the program in West Baltimore, MD. It provided educational upgrading and outreach services. But two of its employees — Todd Duncan and Ronald Scott — were among 13 indicted and arrested on April 12, 2010 by federal authorities on charges of heroin sales and involvement with the Black Guerrilla Family (BGF) gang (Fenton, 2010). The BGF began as a prison gang or security threat group (STG), but today it can readily be found functioning as a street gang as well, even in rural areas of Mississippi. According to the indictment and affidavits filed, both Duncan and Scott walked on both sides of the fence — they did their gang outreach work for the program, and they also did some gang banging for the BGF. So their role as “counselors” or persons involved in the helping profession was really just a cruel ruse, a ploy to allow them to extend the power of the BGF gang while they are doing “gang prevention work”.

When the trial proceedings were completed in early 2011, 21 BGF gang members were convicted or pleaded guilty making it the single largest prosecution of the BGF in American history. The trial confirmed that the BGF used a “black book” as the blueprint to spread the criminal and violent ideology of the BGF and to recruit new members while using gang prevention as a front for their real mission: not gang prevention, but gang expansion, expanding the BGF empire.

Expressed differently, Duncan and Scott were benefitting from government funding while simultaneously seeking to expand their gang, the BGF. If you went to Duncan or Scott for counseling, you might end up working for the street operations of the BGF.

A mother of four children with no criminal record who worked at Total Health Care in West Baltimore was also one of those indicted and arrested, Kimberly McIntosh (Smith, 2010).

She held rank in the BGF, and her home was basically the operations center for meetings and other activities of the gang. Police raids at both her work and home uncovered BGF gang paraphernalia. So McIntosh, like Duncan and Scott, worked both sides of the fence, they marched to two different drummers ---- but the drum beat they really listened to was the one with the subcultural beat — that from their own gang.

One of the tactics used by the BGF to achieve an appearance of legitimacy involved a self-published book entitled *The Black Book (Empowering Black Families and Communities)*, by: La Eusi Jamaa (The Black Family), it is really authored by Eric Brown, one of the convicted BGF gang members. The book was distributed by the gang to promote the gangs above ground legitimate roles while simultaneously promoting the BGF's extremist views and helping recruit new gang members. The book was endorsed by Anne Arundel Community College Professor, Dr. Tyrone Powers. Former professor Tyrone Powers was also a former FBI counterterrorism agent and was also a former Maryland State Police officer, and held the title of Director for the college's Homeland Security and Criminal Justice Institute (Fenton and Neufeld, 2009).

EIGHT YEARS LATER IT HAPPENS AGAIN: BGF CONTAMINATES A GANG PROGRAM IN PHILADELPHIA

In early November, 2018 Rickey “Dorsey” Evans (38) pleaded guilty to federal racketeering charges in Philadelphia (Anderson, 2018). Evans was a BGF leader who worked for a city-funded program and worked with the Safe Streets program. While he was supposed to mediate conflicts to prevent gang violence, the record shows Evans was holding BGF meetings and staging BGF operations out of the program offices. Evans worked with Shawn “Bucky” Thomas (38), another high ranking BGF member. Their operation came to an end when Baltimore police arrested Evans and eight others in a 2015 raid on the Safe Streets office. The Baltimore police seized seven guns and various drugs at the Safe Streets office that were the property of the BGF.

Because the BGF had been involved in kidnaping and murders both Evans and Thomas are facing long prison sentences.

NEW YORK PROGRAM INVESTIGATED FOR GANG BANGING ON THE JOB

In Harlem, there is an established and well-respected social service agency known as the NYC Mission Society. In 2015, it was gaining a lot of negative publicity for having program staff apparently doing nation work on the job. “Doing nation work” is gang slang for working for the gang to which you belong, most typically selling illegal drugs, or in some other way aiding and assisting in the distribution of unlawful narcotics. The gang outreach component was called “Operation SNUG”, where SNUG has the meaning: guns spelled backwards.

A female member of the SNUG outreach team, having the title of counselor, Shewanna Vaughn, made allegations that her male counterparts in the program were gang banging and slanging on the job, and further, that one or more of these active gang members was even strapped on the job (Weichselbaum, 2015). The Manhattan District Attorney's office initiated an investigation into the allegations (DiLorenzo, 2015).

GANG COUNSELOR ARRESTED FOR BEING IN A STOLEN CAR WITH LARGE

AMOUNTS OF METH

Valley Gang Prevention (VGP), founded by Melvin Valentine Jr., was in operatin for about a month, sponsored by the Hemet-San Jacinto Chamber of Commerce, when it got the kind of news headline that can kill a program. The Hemet Police Department had previously endorsed the program. Then on January 29, 2012, Hemet police arrested Deondre Nix, 27, for being in a stolen car filled with a large amount of meth.

Maybe he was just doing gang outreach to those in the meth business. We do not know.

Nix had been a very popular, very suave volunteer counselor at the Valley Gang Prevention program. He had also appeared in several speaking engagements representing the program. He had a previous record for drugs, a 2008 conviction earned him a 16 month sentence.

Thus, Nix had little “crime free” time on his resume. The NGCRC advocates five years minimum, ideally ten years, for a person such as an exoffender to be employed in such positions of trust. The standard of 5 to 10 years establishes a reasonable belief that they are not recidivists.

Programs that employ exoffenders often have a “five year rule”: the job or volunteer applicant needs to show a five year period of “being clean” (no arrests), similar to how drug and alcohol abuse prevention and treatment programs want to see people demonstrate a significant period of “sobriety” before hiring them in a helping profession capacity.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HOMIES UNIDOS: GOOD GUY OR GANG KILLER?

This is the story of Alex Sanchez who came to the U.S. from El Salvador at age 7 seeking refuge, joined the notorious MS-13 gang at age 14, jailed three times and deported in 1994, returning illegally in 1995 to Los Angeles, granted asylum in 2002.

Sanchez became popular in many circles of southern California for founding Homies Unidos in 1998, a gang intervention/prevention services organization. His supporters include Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa and former state Senator Tom Hayden and others (L.A. City Council President Eric Garcetti; Barrios Unidos; LA City Councilmen Ed Reyes and Tony Cardenas). As a gang activist, Sanchez helped fan the flames of anti-police sentiment during the 1999 LAPD Rampart scandal (Hayden, 2010).

In 2006 Sanchez, according to the indictment, orders that an errant gang member be killed in El Salvador (Hoag, 2010b). The victims name was Walter Lacinis, killed in May of 2006.

Then in June of 2009 there was the arrest of Alex Sanchez, the executive director himself, of Homies Unidos, in Los Angeles and also located in El Salvador raised many eye brows when he was charged by the FBI with RICO, murder conspiracy and drug charges — basically, this program director was also believed by the FBI to be an ongoing member of the MS-13 (Mara Salvatrucha).

In the indictment we learn that there is indeed another side to Sanchez, notably he has a gang name: “Rebelde” or “Rebel”, and was clearly a member of the Normandie faction of the MS-13 .

In January, 2010 Sanchez made bail (\$2 million) thanks to relatives and supporters (including Sen Tom Hayden) who put up sureties and real estate (Hoag, 2010a). If Sanchez goes to federal prison, he will likely ride with the Mexican Mafia — allies of the MS-13. Sanchez is looking at 25 years to life for the RICO, and the death penalty if found guilty of the murder of

Lacinos.

THE UTEC PROGRAM: To Encourage Giving Up Gang Life, or Not?

The UTEC program is a formal gang intervention program in Haverhill that serves youths in the age range of 17 - 25. In December of 2019 the UTEC program was in the news (whav.net) because an alleged gang member who was a participant in the UTEC program or somehow employed by the program as a cook at the time he was arrested for a gang shooting. This in its own right is not really significant, as any program that works with “at risk” youths could in theory read the next newspaper and see a story about a program client arrested for some significant offense. That is the nature of working with and doing outreach to persons who are “on the edge” of a life of crime. The whole idea is to keep them from a life of crime. Prevention and intervention services are ways to reduce crime. It is a good theory.

What surfaced in the media coverage of the UTEC program in late 2019, though, was some of the information embedded in the details of the media coverage. Apparently, the UTEC program had done a public relations program on the radio for a local station (WHAU) in 2018, and the radio station was able to relate some of the information from that program. Apparently, back in 2018 the UTEC Director of Streetwork, Jonathan Lunde, was quoted as saying on the air:

“One thing we never do is tell anyone to leave a gang. I’ve never done that in 10 years. That’s not my decision to make.”

This is curious. Is this an extreme Rogerian therapy? Unlimited positive regard for the gang member clients? So, no expectations whatsoever of future behavior? Is that a good idea? Or does this illustrate an area where gang programs can improve and strengthen their integrity? If you are just handing out valuable services and cash without any “direction” or “molding” or “shaping” of behavior, it would seem to be the perfect single standard of operations to have for a placebo program. If you had to design a placebo program, this standard of social contracting would be the basis for it: you have no expectations, no worries, no pressures on the clients. The problem with this thinking is that we are talking about crime and violence. And gangs, the organizations through which crime and violence impact on our lives. Crime and gangs should be clearly vocalized as issues for program clients. You are not condemning the person, you are condemning the bad behavior.

Why would it be unreasonable to ask someone to give up say heroin if it is something that could kill them? Why would it be unreasonable to ask someone to give up gang life knowing that it is a factor that will in the case of UTEC where they were concerned about preventing recidivism and criminal relapse — continued gang involvement is a high risk factor for recidivism.

NUESTRA FAMILIA/NORTENO TAKEOVER OF THE MILPA PROGRAM IN SALINAS

The MILPA program was created in 2012 without much gang influence, but its focus overlapped with gang interests, and gang members wedged their way into the program, eventually controlling it when a massive expose was published in 2019 (Monterey County Weekly, 2019). The MILPA collective uses Aztec words and symbols, something in the shared culture with Nuestra Familia. MILPA is the acronym for Motivating Individual

Leadership for Public Advancement and is also the Uto-Aztecan word translating as “cornfield”. MILIPA operated as a kind of community-organizing, social justice, advocacy program but oddly never really got involved in anything like gang prevention or youth violence prevention — but doing somewhat related social work like outreach to parolees.

MILPA enjoyed about \$2 million in grants and funding from the California Endowment, James Irvin Foundation, and other sources. It clearly achieved some positive recognition before the program was accused of being a front group or having been “taken over” by the gang. The Monterey County Weekly expose described how the gang intentionally sought to “take over” the legitimate organization as a way for the gang to carry out more sophisticated “public relations” functions like some other gangs have done (Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, organized crime soup kitchens, etc). The gang seemed to achieve that when a federal report in 2016 recommended that the Salinas Police Department should work closer with MILPA, but local police were not hood-winked by the growing level of gang influence in the MILPA program.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARGED WITH EXTORTING SEX FROM CLIENTS

During the years 2001 through 2006, Murray Gordon Waller was the executive director of the Alabama Safety Institute, Inc, located in Mobile, Alabama. This program served as a court referral program to monitor young men placed on probation. Waller was indicted for five counts of sexual extortion and arrested on March 31, 2006, but he failed to appear in court. He is still wanted today by the FBI as a fugitive.

Police records indicate that Waller would extort his young male clients, forcing them to commit sexual acts with him, or Waller would have their probation revoked and send them back to jail. Once Waller had a client under his adverse influence, he would have help recruit other young men on the Internet, to help Waller evaluate their potential for sexual exploitation.

When the executive director of a program has a sexual problem or addiction, and it overlaps with issues such as gang membership, subcultures, or drugs, then it is common to see a “crash landing” for the program. It is a common ending to see the program come to an abrupt end, if it is a halfway house, the contract with the program would be terminated immediately, and the building shut down, etc.

Sexual Exploitation of Clients Very Common

Many cases have appeared in the media involving gang programs where personnel in the program were arrested for sex crimes involving their clients. A good gang prevention program needs not just basic policies and procedures on things like Affirmative Action, but it also needs clearly understood written policies and procedures that spell out termination of employment in situations where program employees become sexually involved with the program clients. The position of power by the program employee, and the subordinate position of being a client in a program, is enough to establish it is a type of sexual abuse.

Sometimes what appears in the news media are other variations of exploitation, such as child molestation. The founder and executive director of the “Relief From the Streets” program in Thomasville, Georgia was arrested for child molestation in May, 2015. The program may have been a good program, no one knows. It was reported that the local schools used the program (Dozier, 2015).

Lawton Outreach Center: Program Director Convicted of 13 Counts of Felony Fraud

There are several lessons to be learned in the study of the Lawton Outreach Center (LOC). The LOC program started in 2000 and was located in Lawton, Oklahoma. Pat Paige was the executive director of the program from its founding until September, 2003 when media reports first surface of irregularities at the LOC program. She helped get the program on the map, to get it federally funded, because she was also once the director of the local “Weed and Seed Program”. As early as 2003 there were accusations of fiscal impropriety, poor records, lack of accounting controls, in spending \$625,000 in federal grants (Price, 2007).

Ultimately, the FBI had to get involved and they quickly unraveled the financial mess to reveal that Paige had committed wire fraud, money laundering, and giving false statements, etc, basically 13 federal felony charges. She was convicted by jury trial in November, 2007. In June, 2008 she was sentenced to a year and a day, and ordered to pay \$37,825 in restitution, and serve three years of supervision after release (Edgmon, 2008).

Where The Gang Program Is a Victim/Witness

Where the gang program discovers someone stealing or abusing their funds and works with investigators to solve the problem it is clear that the program itself can be a victim. And it can be a witness when it cooperates for the prosecution by providing information and testimony. So can it be a good idea to “downplay” the actual name of the program or service organization in official press releases? Yes, quite possibly, there is no need to bring shame to the legitimate gang program and any news coverage that mentions the program by name in the context of a criminal prosecution can be conceived of as harmful to the reputation of the program and its public image, its very integrity.

So basically stealing from a gang program is an offense that happens in all areas of social services, not just gang prevention and intervention and outreach programs. In 2021 the U.S. Secret Service worked with the Miami Police Department to investigate one such case where a program employee — the name of the program was not listed but it was identified as a religious charity organization that runs after-school programs for underprivileged immigrant children to help them avoid gangs and gang violence — used the company credit card to rack up over \$160,000 in illegal purchases. The investigation led to the federal indictment against Ramon Caridad Rodriguez (28). What made it a federal case was not theft of federal funding, but when it involves wire transfer it is often interstate and thus wire fraud. Each charge or count of wire fraud can carry a 20 year sentence.

Where Your Public School Dean is a Latin King Drug Pusher

This is fortunately an extremely rare situation where a member or leader of a street gang becomes apart of the local government’s public school system. This is the true story of Shaun “Rev” Harrison. In May of 2023, at age 63, Harrison was sentenced to 18 years in federal prison for his role as a Dean where he lured students into joining the Latin Kings gang in Boston where they worked selling mostly marijuana to other students in the Dean’s school - - - in this case, “The English High School” in Boston.

This is a case of the fox in the hen house, as Harrison held the position of Dean at the

school. Imagine having your son referred to Dean Harrison by a teacher who was told your student could benefit from his special anger management after school program for male students. If your son is signed up for the after school anger management program and ultimately is recruited into a drug gang, is that “program malpractice”? Or can it be construed as a type of severe child abuse when the anger management program has the opposite effect on students who participate in it?

Harrison had been hired by the English High School in 2015. Among his official roles was to work with at-risk students and administer an after school anger management program for boys. There should have been a lot of “red flags” that parents, other school administrators, and school teachers in particular must have seen before it became known that Harrison was recruiting and operating a gang in the same high school.

Harrison groomed and cultivated his gang operatives and recruited enough members to be able to operate a sophisticated crime operation with the concealment of government itself.

Harrison had been convicted in state court in 2018 for assault after shooting a student in the back of the head over a pay dispute - - - pay in this case being the student who was shot was a new member to the drug gang, working mostly at selling marijuana to other students in the high school, and Harrison was suspicious about the low level of cash coming in from his new sales rep.

The student was 17-years-old when in 2015 once inside the gang and was shot in the back of his head execution style by his own gang leader - - - Harrison of course . Harrison’s gang of orientation was the Latin Kings. Anyone he recruits can be considered a Latin King. But even better - - - the Dean who signs your high school Diploma is the gang leader you work for. Fortunately the student lived to learn another day.

Harrison sported a Latin Kings tattoo as well as a large wall mural in his home apartment of the Latin King’s gang insignia. On May 31, 2018 Harrison was convicted in Suffolk Superior Court for armed assault with intent to commit murder. On June 1, 2018 Harrison was sentenced to 23 to 26 years in Massachusetts state prison to be followed by five years of supervision.

Should parents and the children themselves have the right to sue the public school system of Boston for gross negligence if they also got recruited into gang life back during that same time frame in the same school? Maybe they got recruited into a Folks gang that was constantly fighting the Latin Kings throughout the school year - - - and the Latin Kings in this case was a kind “state sponsored street gang” because it’s leader was also the Dean of the high school.

Harrison pleaded guilty to federal RICO charges back in August 2022.

If The Government Authority Funds a Gang Leader and the Gang Leader Diverts the Government Funding to Gang Use: Is that then a State-Sponsored Gang?

Most people might want to say it has to be open and notorious and well known or well-documented in the mass media from multiple sources, to make this kind of government funding to a gang leader be considered state-sponsorship. But from a victims point of view there is much less vagueness here - - - if you are a victim of a gang made stronger and more prosperous by means of government funding, then that gang crime is a result of state-sponsorship. Government funding emboldens a gang and gives it the appearance of being above the law.

In March of 2025 the story emerged from one of the gang prevention and intervention

programs funded by the Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) of Los Angeles, California. So GRYD funding is distributed by the City of Los Angeles, at the municipal level of government. One of the programs it funded was called “Developing Options” headed up by Eugene “Big U” Henley Jr. (58). Henley it turns out is a long-time leader of the Rolling 60's Crip gang in the Los Angeles area.

Federal authorities investigating the case were able to indict Henley in March of 2025 and he was arrested for what were described as “mafia-like” crimes. Government funding to Henley’s gang intervention program became a cover for further criminality. Promised delivery of social services in the name of gang prevention were ignored and funding was simply diverted to the use of the gang leader.

How can someone considered a current and active leader of a criminal street gang even be considered as a legitimate social service bidder on a funding program like GRYD? It boggles the mind. Unless, of course, other elements of corruption are operating in the same context.

If your city or county has a funding authority that is designed to fund programs to achieve gang prevention and intervention, then it seems there are many hidden risks that could be associated with giving that funding directly to the gang you are trying to put out of business.

Unity T.W.O., Inc: Claimer of Much Success in Gang Peace Treaties with the Swan Bloods

This program was started by former Swan Blood gang member Kevin Mustafa Fletcher. The primary services from this program were brokering peace treaties, called “understandings”, among Los Angeles gangs. One of the gangs the program claimed to be very effective in working with for such peace treaties was of course the gang of origin for the program executive director: the Swan Bloods.

Founded in 1998 the program claimed success in a number of different “understandings” or gang truces. In no such truce, of course, did any of the gangs “sign” any agreement, nor did any of the gangs turn in any weapons of any kind. And of course if you put two of these rival gang members together in the same cell today, from any of the “truce” gangs, they will fight as normal gang rivals do.

In July, 2009 the City of Los Angeles suddenly decided not to renew any contracts with the Unity program. There were no arrests of program staff, no major public relations breakdowns, or that kind of thing often associated with such cases when the government suddenly withdraws financial support for a program. We may never know the full story here, the City of LA was tight lipped on the issue. But it was here one day, gone the next, all we have are vague statements to the effect “that it had failed to account for hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars” (Castro, 2009, p. 1).

Peace Treaties and Gang Summits: The Interesting Story in Stockton.

On December 10, 2025 a story surfaced in the news about someone from Temple, Texas who was inviting rival gangs to a peace summit in Stockton, California. The outside group goes by the name Youth Peace and Justice Foundation which is a part of a larger enterprise called the “Uvalde Foundation for Kids”. We see the name Daniel Bodhi Chapin, 54, from Temple, Texas on the Form 990 e-Postcards for the last three years (2024, 2023, 2022) when you search the tax exempt file for the tax number 88-3268749 at apps.irs.gov/apps.eos/. We could not find a staff

directory or actual office location for the program, but the program website has a very modern look featuring an impressive photo of thirteen teenage girls holding up a sign entitled “Youth Impact Model Peace & Growth”. For the last three years apparently the Uvalde Foundation for Kids is reporting less than \$50,000 per year in income by using the Form 990 e-Postcards.

It was Chapin who in December, 2025 was trying to bring the gangs together and take responsibility for what may happen as a result. The media hype was that he would bring peace to Stockton's four major gangs: 1. Conway Gangsters, 2. Sinners Click, 3. Fly Boys, and 4. East Coast Crips. Chapin is reported as claiming he could put an end to the recurring cycle of gang retaliation between these four major gangs. Chapin is from the Youth Peace and Justice Foundation group that is a part of the Uvalde Foundation for Kids. The news reports said that the group is inviting rival gangs to gather on Friday, December 12th at 9:00 p.m. at an undisclosed location for peace summit and to achieve a ceasefire.

For deep background information on Chapin and the Uvalde Foundation for Kids we have benefitted from the report by Dreger (2023). Dreger points out that a “perusal of the team members page indicated an absence of named corporate directors” and that “the IRS requires a governing board of directors for a 501c3 nonprofit organization”. Dreger as an investigative reporter noted that “Chapin revealed that he is not only the national director, he is also a board member and the chief financial officer. This didn't seem reassuring, as it appears to mean he's controlling the money, overseeing the finances, and getting paid as the top employee (and maybe as the only employee?).”

The Stockton climate in December, 2025 was one that might have been dealing with some level of delay in response to inquiries from the public to police whether the recent mass shooting at a toddlers birthday party killing 4 and wounding 15 was or was not gang-related. The denial syndrome becomes the default if the leaders in a community like Stockton do not recognize and readily admit to having an existing and ongoing gang problem. This issue is linked to the peace treaty meeting by the fact that there was a recent mass shooting in Stockton and police have not yet commented on whether it was gang-related, or gang-motivated, or associated with any ongoing battle or armed conflict between rival gangs operating in the same geographical area.

There is not much of a history of gang peace treaties to build upon. Many have been little more than myths and misconceptions that have appeared in the news media. The summits are real, such as the large ones organized by the Gangster Disciples in Chicago in the 1990's, but the peace treaties are not really historical agreements that have survived the test of time. So when someone thinks they can be the Henry Kissinger to modern gangs, they have to face the fact that little evidence exists about the lasting positive effects of gang peace treaties anywhere in the world.

Claims making is easy in the world of gang peace treaties because those organizing the event can claim the need for obscurity in order to protect the privacy of those involved - - i.e., active criminal offenders in a community. So it is easy to claim a successful gang negotiation because it is analytically a kind of black box where we cannot see what goes on inside. The details are murky, the documentation is ethereal, and it is easy to claim a success and then when violence erupts again at least the claim can still be made that it was an effective treaty for a limited time.

There may be a role for some kind of Henry Kissinger to the Gangs, but we need to be able to fully and completely trust that person as representing the best interests of the society, and that means we probably need someone like a police officer or a prosecutor wearing the hat of peace treaty negotiator.

What actually happened at 9:00p.m. on December 12th, 2025 in Stockton regarding the gang summit? We do not know. What we do know is that Chapin did not interface with other gang intervention and gang prevention experts who were already in place in Stockton. Stockton is blessed to have an Office of Violence Prevention at the municipal level of government as well as some people in the community who have been doing gang work for many years. But according to other news reports Chapin did not contact them or keep them informed about his planned gang summit (see Leathley, 2025; <https://stocktonia.org/news/public-safety/2025/12/12/gangs-ceasefire-meeting-questions/>).

What we do know is that Chapin brought a number of different background skills to the gang problem in Stockton. We were able to check some of the claimed areas of expertise and skill. Some clearly check out. Some important ones did not check out.

Unique here is the broadly arrayed skill set that Chapin brought to this gang peace treaty summit meeting in Stockton, California included his career background as a musician (www.reverbnation.com/danielbodhichapin). He has many songs listed, seems like a great voice so we know his claim to be a vocalist is true, and some of his past performances as a lead vocalist doing Christian gospel music are also listed for Temple, Texas. He claims to have produced an album, Munich 2011. He is certainly recognized as a musician and his Facebook shows a number of these photographs, including one dated 1973 of him being held as a baby by Elvis Presley.

Another skill area that Chapin had comes from his career phase as Pastor Daniel Bodhi Chapin. His facebook page mentioned that he was listed in the *2019 Strathmore Directory of Who's Who in Religious Leaders*. That is generally regarded as a pay to be in print kind of vanity directory. You want your name printed in the directory, you pay for it. It was not clear what church or Christian denomination that Chapin received his theological training or tutelage in. But his "About the Author" on Amazon.com claims he has planted churches and ministries in California, Texas, Hawaii, and Tennessee via Calvary Chapel as founder of the Makaha, Hawaii based "Aloha Church". When I spoke with a pastor who has lived in Makaha for many years of her life she did not recognize this church nor the name of Chapin but said perhaps it could have been a house church - - - one can practice religion outside of an established real church. But clearly that church is not a traditional church holding regularly weekly services that we could verify. His bio listed on Amazon.com refers to his identity as an ordained minister: "*Chapin's work in ministry and wedding officiation reflects a similar set of ideals along with the talent needed to put them to use. An ordained minister, his studies in sociology and theology at Loyola Marymount University and his degree in Christian chaplaincy from UCMI Pastoral Training Institute*". There exist a large number of "pastoral training institutes" in the world today, but we could not find any called the "UCMI Pastoral Training Institute".

Another self-described skill set for Chapin is his career history of being an activist. Like having a religious focus or identity this activist role is also sometimes found in those who work in the field of gang prevention and gang intervention. This is how his "about the author"

describes himself in the Amazon.com book bio: “*Chapin...is known for his activism for youth and public contraversial (sic) ministry approaches, in addition to his expressed, public discontent with the Christian Church of today. His service amongst organizations such as, the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the Consulate Generale of Mexico in Los Angeles at times has deemed Chapin more radical than conservative on many fronts.*”

Still another skill that Chapin brought to deal with the gang problem in Stockton was his career phase in the performing arts as a method actor. In April of 2016 Chapin was one of the many actors in the cast of “Our Town” performed at the Temple Civic Theater located at 2413 South 13th Street in Temple, Texas. In 2017 Chapin was listed as providing a free workshop for youth and adults as director of Central Texas School for the Performing Arts. Chapin issued an open casting call for drama, dance, and voice teachers for his newly founded school (ctxlivetheater.com/news/teachers-wanted-for-temple-s-new-central-texas-s/). We are not sure how his school is doing today, one listing says it is located at 10 West Avenue B, Temple, TX 76501 (Tel. # 254 563-5279) and the Facebook page states it is located at 3550 SW H K Dodgen Loop, Suite 112, Temple, TX (Tel # 254 718-0891).

Still another skill area was Chapin’s role as a scholar as indicated by the fact that he is a published book author. His book is entitled “*World Without End, Nuclear Bombs & Chunky Peanut Butter: Essays From a Modern Day Pilgrimage*”. Paperback price on amazon.com is \$7.99 and the cover image appears to show palm trees on the pacific ocean. We have ordered a copy of the book, it is also available on eBay.

Chapin claimed to have previous management experience. In his bio at Amazon.com he claimed his “past role as President at non-profit organizations such as the Coalition for the Advancement of Civil Justice illustrates his commitment to equality, fairness, and progress”, but no such organization exists by that name. We could not therefore verify his skill set in this area. We are aware that his book apparently covers his “personal stories of drug use to running multimillion dollar rehab centers” (quoted from Amazon.com).

So, what happened after the December 12, 2025 alleged peace treaty summit? Chapin issued his own press release at his website. Of course he claimed success in achieving a special kind of conditional truce which he called the “Epiphany Truce”. It went into effect and needs the City of Stockton to do something called “institutional commitment” before January 15, 2026 or else if the ceasefire stops it is because the city failed to show institutional commitment. It is a lengthy press release that is vague and ambiguous and which spells out a variety of superfluous details.

It calls for some kind of special meeting on January 15, 2025 at 2:00p.m. in Stockton as a FINAL DEADLINE (caps in original). That is when the city leaders are supposed to demonstrate political will. Will to do what? Again, it is not very focused or specific in its language style, so it is not really transmitting any meaningful demand. For example, the press release mentions that Chapin wants to start up something called the AnchorPoint (sic) Trauma Center in Stockton. Here is what it said:

“AnchorPoint Trauma Center:

Despite current political climate and lack of city support, the Foundation remains committed to opening the AnchorPoint Hub, dedicated to providing mental health and specialized recovery support for victims of gun violence and homicide, independent of any GVI partnership. The Hub

will also serve as the Northern California chapter for the foundation.”

. Is this a request for funding for the northern California chapter of Chapin’s organization? It is not very clear what exactly it means but it does help us to better understand why Chapin has invested so much time and effort to seek so much mass media attention for a gang truce in Stockton. In summary, the Stockton gang peace treaty summit meeting is a curious situation that leaves us more puzzled the more we look into it. It may be valuable to revisit this matter in the future. But to summarize: while no pictures of hand shakes between rival gang members emerged here, the sole person involved claimed success in a press release. When I attended the Chicago gang peace treaty summit meeting organized in the 1990’s the gangs clearly sought out the spot light and savored attention in their role as doing good. But again, we have no idea of how or when or where any meeting actually took place for a treaty among the gangs of Stockton. Those facts simply never materialized in the Stockton gang peace treaty..

One thing that did not make sense was the press release included a section of information about the duration of the ceasefire. It stated as follows:

“Ceasefire Duration:

The Conditional Truce is in effect from 11:59 PM PST, Friday, December 12, 2025, through 11:59 PM PST, Friday, January 2, 2026..”

So it was really only a twenty-one (21) day truce. Why would you need a self-ending truce? What value is a self-ending truce? If it is not a permanent solution it is not a solution at all. If you want to try and start a peace treaty between gangs, then logic would inform us that you need to have higher goals than a three week ceasefire.

One thing that did not make any sense was why only four named gangs were invited when Stockton, California is a jurisdiction that has many gangs, all gangs should have been invited unless blame for the mass shooting was being focused on the four named gangs. Clearly there are more than four gangs which have been reported as operating in the Stockton area. The NGCRC maintains the geographical guide to gangs by tracking gangs since the early 1990’s. There are other gangs that have been known to operate in Stockton including: Bloods, Crips, White Pride, Skinheads, Neo-Nazis, Supreme White Power, Asian Gangs (Born to Kill, Wah Ching), Six Street Gangsters, Bahala HNA gang, All Brothers Together, Hell’s Angels, Aryan Brotherhood, Mexican Mafia, Nuestra Familia and others just to mention a few. Like many American cities Stockton has had an intergenerational gang problem for decades. So if any “peace treating summit” is being held, any authentic, genuine and legitimate effort would have to invite all gangs not just the four invited by Chapin.

“Gang Prevention Gone Wild”: The Story Behind the Janice Hahn Viral Video

This story emerged in June of 2011 when Janice Hahn was attacked by a political video portraying her as a Los Angeles politician who hires hardcore gang members, gets them out of jail when they get into trouble. The video, created by Ladd Ehlinger, went viral on YouTube. Hahn then filed an FCC complaint against the video.

The controversy behind the headlines is that police claim Betty Day — a close associate of Janice Hahn — is too intimately tied to the Grape Street Watts gang. Her son Wayne Alfred Day (aka “Honcho”), 55, is a former leader of the Grape Street Crips in Watts who was released in 2008 after serving over 11 years on a federal prison sentence for his part in a multi-million

dollar interstate drug ring. Betty Day held the position as President of the Watts Gang Task Force Council.

Complaints from Betty Day and gang members forced the reassignment of LAPD gang cops Chuck Garcia and Ryan Moreno. A law suit filed by the Police Protective League on behalf of Garcia and Moreno identified councilperson Janice Hahn in particular in the suit against the City of Los Angeles.

As community activists go, at 71 years of age, she is well known to other local leaders and the mayor of Los Angeles. Betty Day for many years served as the block captain of the local neighborhood watch program. She is regarded as the godmother of the Jordan Downs housing project.

There are many examples of persons who through their family structure come to know something about the gang problem, they go on to become political activists, and speak for a specific public housing development or neighborhood. Marion Stamps in Chicago was an example of this type, she had a similar “dynamic” reputation as a community leader, and there was a community perception she had close ties to the Mickey Cobras. But one fact cannot be disputed: community activists like this do have public support, and they do wield power.

That someone like Betty Day would come from a family where there were members who had run-ins with the law should not prohibit anyone from holding any position anywhere. Some communities are more open to this kind of unique background experience than others.

THE PAA PII WAK HALFWAY HOUSE IN WINNIPEG

This was a men’s halfway house program started in 2003 in Winnipeg, Canada that had a focus on serving aboriginal, homeless gang members, receiving about \$270,000 in government funding a year (McIntyre, 2009). The idea was to provide post-release transition services for aboriginal males identified inside corrections as having gang affiliations, and who were homeless, so that upon their release they might be provided with the kind of transition services that would ideally lead to severing their ties to the gang life. That looked good on paper anyhow, but that is not at all how it really worked.

Called an aboriginal men’s treatment and healing center, police surveillance on the location showed it also functioned as: women being delivered and picked up many hours later in a drunken stupor, men leaving the facility drunk, residents violating curfew, cocaine dial-up deliveries to the center, staff intoxicated on the job, basically a party house for one gang — the Manitoba Warriors. No one is breaking free of the gang here. The gang runs this program.

Apparently, how it worked is yes, the staff would identify men about to be released from prison who had no home to parole to, and they selected from these, those aboriginals who were in fact gang members, and recruited them to come into the Paa Pii Wak Halfway house. The program hired active gang members, a recipe for disaster. Not surprisingly, the active gang members who supervised recently released gang members, often basically encouraged gang banging behavior. The loud drinking parties at the halfway house earned it the reputation of being a “Manitoba Warriors” clubhouse. The Manitoba Warriors is the name of a well-known aboriginal gang street gang and prison STG that has been around since 1992. A very corrupting culture developed in the program, as it was homogeneous with respect to gang affiliation (Manitoba Warriors only). Homeless aboriginal gang members from a rival gang like the Native

Syndicate could never get services from the program.

A police investigation (Project Octopus) was started in October 2008, so that between December, 2009 and January, 2009, seven of the program staff members were arrested. Funding from the Canadian government stopped in January, 2009 as well.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE “NO FRATERNIZATION” RULE

The idea of a “no fraternization” rule comes from substance abuse programs where it was discovered that these programs bring people together, and that when friendships form inside the treatment milieu and extend to the outside world, it can increase the probability of relapse. This is true because of what is called the “risky shift” effect: deviance is more likely in a group of deviants. Like the explanations for criminal damage to property incidents at Halloween, there are things kids would never do alone, but in a group they will engage such behavior — the group ethos encourages it.

This concept of “no fraternization” is also based on studies of the gang as a group process (Short and Strodtbeck, 1965). In other words, your program should not facilitate the development of additional alliances and cliques of gang members as a result of their interaction inside your treatment or intervention program. For some clients on probation or parole, it may be the case that their own official court mandate conditions of probation or parole specifically forbid knowingly associating with other gang members. Interaction inside the program or treatment milieu itself cannot be interpreted as knowingly associating, it is inadvertent associating as a result of program operations and structure. But the issue needs to be formalized in writing as a standard of program design: no intentional or knowingly associating with other program clients outside of the program treatment center, it must be explicitly forbidden..

The “no fraternization” rule, if properly implemented, helps to prevent gang contamination effect, a reverse intended consequence of an improperly administered gang program.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REMEMBERING THAT GANG PREVENTION WORK CAN EXPOSE STAFF TO DANGER

It should be clear that working with offenders or working with persons prone to violence, or when working with gang members or gangs, that this kind of work environment will carry with it a significantly higher level of actual risk than say working in a fast food business or in a university. The issue is that any social service program that is pinpointed to target outreach to a specific subset of the population such as gang members or persons at-risk of joining a gang is one that moves closer to danger. Everyday life has its dangers for any job, some jobs are more risky and dangerous than others.

It is important to remember the hidden dangers that exist in working with a gang prevention program. There is a case study that can be used to illustrate this. It is the story about the “hit” on a program manager in Hawaii.

On or about 9:45 p.m. on March 27th, 2021, Malakai “Mo” Maumalanga, MSW (45) was at his home in Aiea, Hawaii. He was the director of Re-Directional Services, a program component of Adult Friends for Youth, which provides services to at-risk youths. Two hitmen approached his home, knocked on the door and when Mr. Maumalanga answered the door he was

shot repeatedly.

A family man with wife and 3 children and 2 foster children, he was known as a generous person who had risen about his own legal problems in the 1990's.

Anti-Violence Program Director Charged With Battery

Warren Jackson bills himself as a national motivational speaker and created the organization “We Stop The Killings” (WeStopTheKillings.org). The WeStopTheKillings (WSTK) website shows him in a photo with Mayor Daley, photos of him with young students, and he describes himself as a “modern day freedom fighter”, “a dynamic businessman, renaissance thinker and true visionary”. The WSTK organization is “designed to produce entrepreneurship opportunities, transformation through personal development, motivation and guidance among Chicago’s youth” (ibid). The website does solicit gifts, but it does not make any promise about the donation being tax deductible, nor does the website claim WSTK is a non-profit organization.

A close reading of the website shows this program was more of a hobby, there was no annual report for the program, no statistics on clients served, no information on achievements of any kind. If there were any direct services, it was not clear what they would be, so anyone who gave a donation was probably just donating to Jackson the motivational speaker.

But on December 2, 2010 the Attorney General’s Office for the State of Illinois filed civil suit against Jackson and five others (Rueff, 2011). The lawsuit seeks to shut down the WSTK organization because it is illegally soliciting charitable donations in the State of Illinois and the lawsuit asserts that WSTK falsely claimed that the donations would be used to prevent youth violence in Chicago (ibid). It probably did not help the WSTK program when Jackson was arrested for charge of battery involving an assault on a woman in car.

TALKS THE TALK BUT DOESN’T WALK THE WALK

When you pick someone who is deeply tied into the subculture to be a “side kick” on speaking engagements, it can add a lot of instant legitimacy to your message. After all, you have brought with a kind of “show and tell” example of someone with street credentials. Some will obviously see the list of advantages in this kind of exploitation. But there is an important disadvantage if the sidekick ever goes sour.

On August 24, 2011, Ex-gang violence speaker Kolby Martin, 27, aka “Hollywood” fired a .38 at two gang rivals in the West Hill area of (Gavin, 2011). Martin was affiliated with the OGK’s (Original Gangsta Killas). He is said to have worked with Ron “Cook” Barrett, gang prevention specialist, with the City of Albany , New York. Barrett is said to have taken Martin with on at least 12 different speaking events (Gavin, 2010).

When picking people who have been involved in the gang life, you need to look for irreversible types of changes: where they have dropped their flag, where they have testified against their own gang, where they like police (not hate them), where they have removed or covered over any gang tattoos, where they have subsequently settled down married gotten an education and are employed for a substantial period of time, where they have exemplified that they have a moral compass that would prohibit them from going back into that subculture — they need to show that they have repudiated the values of gang life.

Director of “No Guns” Anti-Gang Project Was Actually Selling Machine Guns and Silencers

This is the sad but true story of Hector Marroquin, Sr., who in 1996 started an organization called “No Guns” in Los Angeles. He portrayed himself as a former member of the Mexican Mafia, although officials would claim he was always active with the gang and a “shot caller” as well, that it was always just a ruse to appear to be inactive. During the time frame of 2003 to 2006, his program received \$1.5 million in funding to carry out gang prevention services. Hector Marroquin, Jr., the son of the founder, was the director of gang outreach at the No Guns program. But in 2006, when Hector Marroquin, Jr., was convicted of a home invasion, the city funding to the program stopped.

In fact during 2006 the program took a nose dive, because undercover agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and Explosives (BATFE) were able to make an illegal gun buy from the senior Marroquin. Marroquin was shown in federal surveillance video to be selling machine guns and silencers (Cathcart, 2008). He ended up pleading guilty to three gun charges and received an eight year prison sentence.

The Saga of Leaving the Gang: Park Hill Bloods Example in Denver

Terrance Roberts was said to once have been the leader of the Park Hill Bloods gang in Denver, but turned his life around and began doing gang prevention/intervention work. Roberts became widely known as an anti-gang activist. As of February 2015, Roberts is still now awaiting trial on shooting Hasan Jones in 2013. Jones was shot five times and is now paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair. Roberts does not deny shooting Jones.

So it is possible that tensions existed between Roberts and Jones, and that leaving the gang is not really that easy. Roberts still faces attempted murder, assault, and weapons possession charges at the time of this writing. Roberts refused a plea deal. Roberts claims self-defense.

Professor of Kinesiology at CSU San Bernadino Was Leader in the Devils Disciples Motorcycle Gang

Here is a case that exemplifies high integration into both legitimate society and high integration into the deviant subculture of biker gangs. It illustrates that you need to watch out for someone who marches to multiple drummers, in other words the clues were always there, this was a professor who often talked about his biker buddies as if there were a family.

In early September, 2011, the story broke about Dr. Stephen J. Kinzey (43) who held the position of associate professor, teaching kinesiology at California State University, San Bernadino. A raid on his house on August 26, 2011 yielded Devils Disciples outlaw motorcycle gang paraphernalia, body armor, handguns, rifles, and more than a pound of methamphetamine. Initial reports indicated that Professor Kinzey was a local leader of the Southern California Devils Disciples, an outlaw or one percenter (1%) gang (Wayland, 2011).

He would not be the first professor as “gang member”. There was the case of a psychology faculty member on the east coast about a decade ago who hung out so much with the Latin Kings, they insisted on having him as a leader, and he was promptly indicted for federal

prison time. The NGCRC has been aware of a number of OMG associates or former members over the year who teach in higher education, they are not that uncommon. There are of course many university professors whose gang expertise consists of being very friendly to gangs, they are usually gang apologists (advocating on behalf of gangs and gang members, sometimes as a bully pulpit for political criticism of American society), and some of these make a lot of side income from criminal defense attorneys by testifying on behalf of gang members.

Your clients in a gang prevention/intervention program need to be steered out of and away from deviant and subcultural lifestyles. You need mainstream people to help them develop mainstream social skills. You are not doing them any favors by hiring staff simply because they can talk the talk or walk the walk of gang life. Your job is not to facilitate gang activity, but to replace it even eliminate it. To do that you should not use people tied into subcultures, and you should never use or employ someone who is an active gang member or especially a gang leader.

Temporary Displacement of Gang Members: Giving Them a Mini-Vacation

We should begin by recognizing that gang members as a general rule of thumb have higher levels of trauma and this affects their mental health. So the main idea is to give gang members a little dose of the kind of therapy the middle class gets: a short getaway, a mini-vacation. One person from one gang program in Seattle claims to have provided 16 gang members from two rival gangs such a mini-vacation as a way to reduce gang violence. It is claimed by Dominique Davis, the founder of a gang program called Community Passageways in Seattle, that he sent one faction to Los Angeles and their rival group to Phoenix where the gang members got 30 days of a paid vacation to work with therapists and mentors (<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/gun-violence-spike-leads-groups-in-seattle-and-nationwide-to-take-novel-approaches>; <https://usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2022-07-19/gun-violence-leads-community-groups-to-take-bolder-action>).

For the record, we could not find much in the way of documentation about this mini-vacation idea as a mental health strategy. A lot of basic but important management issues arise in this kind of program service. Are we sending eight gang members from the same gang together a distance of 1,167 miles from Seattle to Los Angeles? Or is this done individually, one at a time, alone, each to different hotels? Or are all eight members of the same gang sent together and put up in two hotel rooms that allow for “four some” rates. None of this basic information was provided in the news coverage or at the program’s website. But it makes a big difference in terms of what could be “blow back” or non-intentional consequences of this kind of experiment with gang violence prevention. We would urge great caution in this regard.

If a roomful of gang members use their per diem for drugs and have a big party in the hotel room paid by the program and conflicts arise there resulting in harm or violence would the program be liable for this kind of foreseeable and preventable harm? What if the Seattle gang starts banging in Los Angeles, would the program be morally or legally responsible?

Clever Scam or Gang Version of a Social Put-on?

The downfall of this “gang program” in Little Rock, Arkansas probably began when the program founder’s 14-year-old son was killed in July 2016 (Tarinelli, 2017). Then in October of 2017 the program executive, Chris Alexander, was finally arrested for possessing large quantities

of marijuana as well as gun offenses. The very name of the program, which provided sports services as a gang prevention initiative, remains a mystery “Better Community and Family Values” — which a gang specialist might see as having the letters BCFV that could be a secondary meaning for “Bloods Crips Folks and Vicelords” — interestingly, the main gangs of Little Rock. If the head of the program was a major drug dealer, that would explain how his son was killed in gunfire, the shooters may have been gunning for the father Chris. In January of 2019, Alexander (age 42), pleaded guilty to possessing about 100 pounds of marijuana and a 9mm Kel-Tec rifle, claiming he sold drugs to provide funding for his youth program (Satter, 2019). He received a 10 year federal sentence in 2019.

The Advance Peace Program in Fresno: Clout and Funding Don’t Always Guarantee Success

The Advance Peace program was originally developed in Richmond, California by DeVone Boggan. It operates in Sacramento and Oakland and began operating in Fresno through the Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission. It is said to operate in different areas of California as well as in other states. President Joe Biden gave a kind of recommendation to the program in July 2021 when he described Boggan’s program as a model that should be replicated nationwide (Calacsan and Schiavo, 2021). If the program considers you a potential shooter in gang violence, then you would be eligible to receive a monthly stipend for up to 18 months in duration. And you can be in any gang you want, but it might help if you were a member of one that its staff were members of.

This is one of the gang programs that has had the benefit of ample funding. It received \$300,000 in what is called federal “earmark” funding. Earmarks are an asterisk placed on the budget of an agency like the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) where someone in Congress (an elected member of the house or senate) is asking for that amount of money to be set aside for a specific program. In this case, it was U.S. Representative Jim Costa (D-Fresno) who helped get the earmark funding for the Advance Peace program.

It not only had clout to get a federal earmark - - - the holy grail in program funding - - - but it also had great national relationships up to the level of the President of the United States.

The Advance Peace program also had been awarded a \$900,000 grant from the California Board of State and Community Corrections. It got another \$125,000 from the City Council of Fresno - - - plus it had private donations. So it was a gang outreach and intervention program with excellent funding and local governmental support - - - until some of its staff were arrested for gang murder charges.

In April, 2022 an Advance Peace employee named Leonard Smith was arrested and charged in a murder conspiracy case. A federal investigation called Operation No Fly Zone had charged 42 people with various violent street gang felonies. One was Leonard Smith who was on staff with the Advance Peace program. Court records showed he was also a member of the 107 Hoover Crips gang.

Up until Smith’s arrest the Fresno Police Department had been working closely with the Advance Peace program because it was after all a city-funded program. But the Fresno Police Department announced after Smith’s arrest in connect with two recent homicides that they would no longer be able to work with the Advance Peace program. It was not just the arrest of Smith.

Threats had been made to one or more Fresno City Council members. And the Fresno Police Department could no longer trust the program by sharing sensitive information with them.

In June, 2022 the Fresno City Council cut its funding to the Advance Peace program (Gligich, 2022). That meant the program would in all likelihood “go belly up” for lack of stable funding and being viewed as untrustworthy by the local police department. And it meant that almost \$1 million in government funding could now be used and re-allocated to some other local worthwhile programs (Taub, 2022).

Here’s a great evaluation research hypothesis to test on the program should data be available: is the representation of gangs represented on the program staff equivalent to that of the gangs identified historically in Fresno gang violence events? Or is the gang representation on staff different? Are both Bloods and Crips equally distributed in the staff? Are outreach workers like Smith who is a Crip as effective in their gang counseling when dealing with rival gang members? Fresno is the birthplace of one of the most well-known gangs in California - - - the Fresno Bull Dogs. So to evaluate a program that intentionally hires active gang members we would have to ask how the Fresno Bull Dog gang fits in.

Gang Violence Inside the Gang Program

It happens on a low intensity level everyday would be a good assumption. But sometimes the level of violence escalates and people are killed. This was the case on January 23, 2023, at the “Starts Right Here” gang mentoring program located in Des Moines, Iowa. A gang member client of the program came to the program with a loaded gun equipped with an extended magazine and confronted two rival gang members inside the offices of the program. The program director - - - William Holmes - - - made a heroic effort to stop the shooting but he himself was shot in the process. While he lived, two program gang member clients did not live, they died from the gunshot wounds received on the premises of the gang intervention program (Higgins, 2023).

Dealing with gang rivalries is a necessary risk when bringing gang members together. In school classroom environments that are otherwise peaceful places, when rival gang members are in the seats, you can have a gang disturbance on your hands at the drop of a hat. Because that undercurrent of historical enmity - - - the force of hatred and retaliatory violence - - - is always present among gang members. These are persons who have experienced high levels of trauma in the past. They are probably ready to fight at any time. So it does not take much to set them off.

What usually sets off such a violent conflict on the premises of the program is either a “deal one bad”: someone sells something, not happy with the product, or not paying on time for the product, and someone feels like they are being “punked”. They strike first to defend their reputation. And there is the “status threat” situation that arises anytime you bring rival teams or rival gang members together: they make insulting comments or remarks about a person and his gang. Also called “fighting words”. Which means that a good program that brings rivals together in a common mixing area should probably be enforcing some type of “language courtesy”: no put downs, no gang insults.

Beware of Antagonizing Political Activists

Sometimes it is unfortunately true that in public life conflicts can arise out of any issue.

Here is an example of a great idea for helping the community address the gang problem, but it is attacked by a special interest group. This case study involves the district attorney for Orange County in California, who in 2015 wanted to use some settlement funds to help pay for teachers to tutor students at risk of gang involvement — a gang prevention and reduction initiative in the region called GRIP (Gerda, 2015). The district attorney, Tony Rackauckas, wanted to use settlement money from a successful lawsuit against the Toyota manufacturer, to help fund a useful and effective gang prevention program. As the information was shared with the public, suddenly the otherwise popular district attorney is attacked along political grounds, criticized by a group called the Orange County Business Council, a powerful force in local Republican politics; and a group called California Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse. The moral to this story is that it is important to line up the sources of support who can be enlisted if the need arises to defend a gang prevention/intervention policy decision.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Some of the problems in gang programs like the diversion of funds is also one of the easiest problems to prevent. A program that would incorporate yearly cost-effectiveness research into its evaluation plan would be able to show a time series report for various unit costs of service delivery. Therefore the diversion of funds away from the basic work of direct services to clients would show up in the comparison of cost-effectiveness indicators over time. Thus, the ideal program will include cost-effectiveness research in its program design and report cost-effectiveness indicators in its annual report.

Some of the common problems reported in the mass media, such as program staff being arrested for gang or drug activity, can be prevented by simply requiring a “5 to 10 year” period of being gang/crime free (i.e., no arrests during the last 5 to 10 years). These are some of the most embarrassing and corrupting problems and often we find that the programs simply made the mistake of hiring directly out of prison, or directly from the gang. It is never advisable to hire directly out of prison, or directly from a gang. It is never advisable to hire an active gang member: it creates an enormous legal liability for the same program, should that person ever go sour, i.e., become gang-active or gang-supportive.

Most of the “corrupt programs”, those run by gangs for gangs for example, usually do not have a long life cycle and are quickly discovered. The reason they have a built-in “self-destruct” mechanism is that gang snitches need a “get out of jail free card”. If they know of a gang prevention/intervention/treatment program getting government funding, that is also a corrupt organization, it becomes a bargaining chip for the arrestee, he or she has some information to “divulge” to proper authorities. So, because of this natural built-in factor of ease of discovery, corrupt organizations appear from this research to quickly “profile” as such, and develop a negative reputation, drawing attention from investigative bodies, that eventually puts them out of business. While they are not able to survive long term, they do have an incredible local negative impact.

There exist no national or international standards on how to properly develop or administer such gang prevention/intervention programs. But this review clearly highlights the need for such standards. One thing a program needs to do is to ensure it has no “gang contamination” effect: where it may be doing more harm than good. When someone uses the

phrase “best practices” in the context of gang prevention/intervention/outreach programs, they are just guessing...because they do not have access to the actual universe of such programs. They may have knowledge or one or several programs, but they have no access to the basically unknown universe of such programs. The first and only international directory of such programs was compiled by the NGCRC. The NGCRC has tried to organize these programs, and give them a voice, without success. Such efforts shall and will, however, continue.

There is an urgent need for gang prevention, intervention, and outreach programs to band together in an association to develop standards and the kind of long-range strategic planning needed to tackle the modern gang problem today. Currently, it the gang problem is being attacked by a lot of lone rangers. Many such gang problems appear and then disappear almost overnight. Many are nothing more than informal levels of commitment, lacking permanent full time staff and lacking a budget. So we need to remember that a program without real staff or real funding is a feeble “wannabe” program at best.

Research is just now getting underway by the NGCRC to identify all of the gang prevention, intervention, and outreach programs in the world today. Finding these programs has been an ordeal in itself. Most are not federally funded, so an agency like the OJJDP which might itself provide such funding is not necessarily going to have the full and complete data on what programs actually exist in the USA or elsewhere in the world. If you are a gang program, you need to get in touch with the NGCRC.

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