

**Journal of Gang Research, Volume 6, Number 1, Fall, 1998:
Views from the Field of Law Enforcement**

**Written Statement
of
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For The

**U.S. House of Representatives
Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on Crime**

June 17, 1997

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the committee:

I am Sergeant Ron Stallworth, Gang Intelligence Coordinator for the Utah Department of Public Safety's Division of Investigation. I am a 23 year veteran of law enforcement with service in four states (Colorado, Arizona, Wyoming, and Utah) in the areas of uniform patrol, narcotics, vice, criminal intelligence/organized crime, and gangs. As the senior gang investigator in Utah I have been instrumental in establishing the statewide law enforcement response to the gang problem. That influence eventually led to the creation of the suppression and diversion task force in the state. That influence has also been felt throughout the state in the creation of several other multi-jurisdiction gang task forces, each of which has patterned itself after the Salt Lake City effort. I have been recognized nationally as perhaps the foremost law enforcement authority on the subject of "gangster" rap music and its correlation to the gang cultural environment. I have authored three books (currently working on a fourth) on the subject and have presented the information to all aspects of the criminal just system (including most of federal law enforcement) who frequently call upon me as a consultant. I have lectured at several colleges and universities throughout the country and have been certified as an "expert" witness on the subject in the state courts of California and Texas, as well as the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas. I have been interviewed by various national and international media (including ABC PrimeTime Live, CNN, Time Magazine, People Magazine, Washington Post, L.A. Times, and Canadian & Jamaican radio, et. al.). In 1995 I was the subject of a Bill Moyers/PBS special titled, hearings on the subject of "gangster" rap music, gangs, and youth violence in America. I am also the proud father of two sons-Brandon Mychal (11) and Nicolas Jordan (7), whose future I am very much concerned about as I go about the job of trying to understand the nature of criminal street gangs and their influential appeal to the young.

**Raised In The System, Gang Affiliated
Amerikka, Take A Look At What You Created
It Started In The Section, Grew Like An Erection
Spread Like Cancer, Now The Country's Infected**

Those words, gentlemen, are lyrics to a rap song titled “Gang Bangin’.” They clearly illustrate the true nature and complexity of any issue dealing with subject of criminal street gangs. To truly understand the magnitude of this problem and its negative, destructive impact on the foundational infrastructure of American society, we can liken the battle being waged against it to that of a previous threat to the foundation of the American way of life which occurred approximately 130 years ago-the Civil War.

Gentlemen, America is engaged in a Civil War in the 90s the likes of which has not been since the near destruction of the Union over one and a quarter century ago. My words may seem melodramatic but I assure you the impact I speak of is not exaggerated. Let’s examine these a little more closely to see exactly what I mean:

Raised in the system gang affiliated

This has a dual meaning. By “system,” reference is made to the political power structure in this country-from the office of the President and the halls of Congress, down to the municipal level. Gang members and their informal “spokesperson,” the rappers, feel this power structure is designed to keep them (i.e., the disenfranchised minority underclass) in a dependent state, subject to the will of the dominate white majority. In addition they feel the criminal justice system deliberately targets them to satisfy the “blood lust” need of the mainstream majority to exercise their dominion over the minority element whose frequent forays into the criminal world are held responsible for tearing apart the fabric of American society.

Amerikkka, take a look at what you created

The deliberate mis-spelling of “America,” substituting the letter ‘K’ (thrice) for the letter ‘C,’ is an indictment of this political power structure. The symbolic meaning of this “mis-spelling” is that like the notorious Ku Klux Klan, which sprang up from the ashes of defeat suffered by the Confederacy at the hands of the Lincoln inspired-Grant led forces of the North, and which was designed to keep the newly freed slaves fearful and dependent on the dominant white social structure as a means of preserving the “southern” way of life during the period of Reconstruction; the American political process (especially with the recent rise of the dominant conservative right) is intent on keeping the minorities of this country (in particular the black and Latino populace) in a suppressive, oppressive state. This will insure the continued status-quo of the monopolistic white majority (i.e., white supremacy) remains intact. They feel the determination to continue in this vein is the reason for the social conditions which led to the creation and maintenance of the gang culture which grips the nation’s consciousness.

Started in the section, grew like an erection Spread like cancer now the country’s infected

This refers to the influence of the west coast gang culture on the rest of the nation. Specifically it is a reference to the Bloods and Crips of southcentral Los Angeles, but to this could be added the east L.A. dominated Hispanic gang culture. This influential development is expressed in sexual metaphor. In keeping with the inherent male dominance of gangs, the

implication is that the erected penis of gang culture was inserted in the vaginal tract of American society (especially in non-traditional areas of gang activity such as the “heartland” and white suburbia; i.e., Utah) and ejaculated to infect the country with a “cancerous” residue known as “criminal street gangs.”

A close associate of mine a mentor, Sergeant Wesley D. McBride of the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department, arguably the foremost law enforcement authority and spokesman on the subject of gangs in America, an author of a standard text on the subject (“Understanding Street Gangs”), and co-founder/President of the California Gang Investigators Association (the largest and oldest [since 1977] such group in the country and the model for the creation of similar associations throughout the country); has referred to the epidemic growth of gangs in America as being the social equivalent of AIDS. The reference to cancerous infection in the above lyrics would seem to validate Sgt. McBride’s analogy.

Make no mistake, gentlemen, American society is truly engaged in a civil war where this problem is concerned. It is a war, I am sad to say, we as a nation are losing.

In spite of all the resources we have been able to devote to this problem it continues to grow at an exponential rate. The statisticians and a substantial number of law enforcement administrators would have the public believe that the battle against crime is being won based on fractional drops in this particular crime category or that particular crime category. Such conclusions may impress those whose political fortunes rely on that statistical “Sword of Damocles,” but it has no meaning to the citizen whose day to day existence is predicated on the destructive nature of the local element. To a parent whose child has been ruthlessly gunned down in a drive-by shooting, the innocent victim of gang warfare in an otherwise quiet and peaceful neighborhood, the announcement that violent crime is down by a fraction of a percent is no healing salve.

Using short-term statistics (i.e., quarterly) to gage a particular crime reduction program or to promote the degree of safety within a community is an inaccurate measurement by which to validate success or failure. In my state, for example, such statistical measurement was tampered with (i.e., manipulated) to reflect a downward trend in the gang climate of one community. In this case graffiti (which accounts for the single highest category of gang related crime) was separated from the category of “crimes against property” (which, in fact, it is) because that category, due to the prevalence of graffiti and the difficulty in apprehending suspects was constantly rising thereby giving the impression that police efforts devoted to the reduction of property crimes were not having any effect. Therefore under the behest of certain city officials graffiti crime was separated into an individual category which had the “magical” effect of showing a statistical reduction in crimes against property thereby giving the illusion that police efforts were having a positive effect in insuring the public safety against such crimes. Under this guise, the “truer” reading of the problem on the part of the city officials is nothing more than a manipulative means of image building for political gain.

If long-term (i.e., yearly, etc.) statistical evaluation were used, I believe it would indicate a truer, more accurate reflection of the efforts devoted to address the problem. If we can laud the success of a program and all of the effort that went into making it so, then we should not be afraid to, likewise, note the failures. As I mentioned earlier, the problems associated with the devastation wrought by criminal street gangs is of such magnitude that in many cases, in spite of highly innovative efforts on the part of dedicated officials tasked to impact the problem, it steadily increases. This does not necessarily mean that these officials are failures in their work,

but rather shows that the culture of gangs, once it is nourished with the lifeblood of a community, is a putrid growth, the essence of which is extremely difficult (if not impossible without drastic action) to purge.

Short-term statistical measures serve no true purpose except to provide sound bites for elected and appointed officials seeking to assuage the immediate concerns of their constituents. In some cases the immediate concern of these officials is the effect the statistical information will have on the ballot box.

Long-term statistical evaluation would better serve the community by providing a more reliable reading that would benefit all parties concerned: elected and appointed officials, legal scholars, academic researchers, and most of all the citizens most impacted by the subject of those statistics—criminals street gangs.

The civil war I speak of gentlemen is being lost, in part, because of a lack of knowledge on the part of people such as yourselves who are charged with drafting legislation on this issue without getting a thorough indoctrination on the nuances of gang culture. Many times the information presented to you comes from federal law enforcement officials (one agency in particular) whose judgement Congress seems to place much stock in. In many cases these individuals are not necessarily the best source for the information being presented because they are not, as a matter of routine, in the trenches dealing with the problems as are city, county and state gang investigators.

In some areas of the country the latter group have spent as little as nine years (in my case) to as much as 20 or more years (Sgt. McBride for example) devoted towards understanding the culture of street gangs and then using that knowledge to educate their law enforcement colleagues as to more effective ways of combating them. The former, on the other hand, routinely spend two or three years in an assignment and then are transferred to other field offices for, in many cases, changed areas of focus. Even if they spend an entire tour in a single assignment, federal investigators are not strongly entrenched in the community, especially as it pertains to establishing an intimacy with the “natives” among the local gang scene.

I am reminded of two separate encounters with agents from this one particular agency which highlight my perspective on this issue. In the one case an agent seeking information on Skinheads in Salt Lake City was extended an invitation to accompany gang investigators to a location frequented by them. He refused, citing their “fifth” and his desire not to be exposed to it as his reason.

In the more recent case an agent told me of an investigation conducted by his agency in which their goal was to target the local gang “leaders.” When I explained to him that the Utah gang climate, like that of their Los Angeles counterpart, was a loose confederation without a clearly defined leadership structure (i.e., “leaders,” in the traditional sense of word as it applies to organized crime, are non-existent), he indicated it took their investigation six months before they came to that realization. That, gentlemen, was six (6) months of wasted time, manpower, technological resources, and of course—money. It was a complete waste of effort that could have been avoided had this agent and his agency simply reached out to those intimate with the nature of Utah’s gang scene for pre-investigative information on the subject. I might add that this particular conversation took place one week ago. The agent has since been transferred to a duty station in the Washington, D.C. area where he reportedly has been assigned to a section dealing with.....gangs.

Criminal street gangs, by nature, are localized entities, that is to say they are fixtures within their immediate neighborhoods known to one and all, especially the area beat cops (including gang cops). Only someone who is equally a fixture within that neighborhood can deal effectively with a criminal element that to many in the area represents a modern day “Robin Hood.” The gang cop who, in his own way, is a “child of the street” is the one you should be seeking your quest for knowledge. City, county, and state investigators are the ones this body should be reaching out to for knowledge on the subject of criminal street gangs because these are the individuals with the most community resources (i.e., informants, business officials, and the “average” citizen) who by virtue of their day to day involvement with the community have an intimate knowledge on the gang scene in that area that is perhaps, surpassed only by the gang members themselves. These gang cops literally live their subject day in and day out and their degree of knowledge is unparalleled within the ranks of law enforcement, at any level. In this regard I must commend my colleagues from the Drug Enforcement Administration who, unlike their counterpart referred to in the previous paragraph, recognized their limitations in understanding the behavioral traits of gang member and their culture and reached out to me to attempt to provide the members this committee with a basic knowledge of the subject.

The information you gentlemen receive is all too often diluted with misconceptions based on preconceived notions of understanding. I am honored to have been selected to help correct some of these misguided preconceptions of the gang member and his view of the American society and to help you bridge the gap of knowledge regarding this unique (i.e., dysfunctional) lifestyle. I must acknowledge, however, that there are others throughout the country who are equally (if not more so) qualified to impart this information to you. For future reference I would submit the names of Sgt. McBride, Det. Wayne Caffey of the Los Angeles Police Department, Lt. Reggie Wright of the Compton Police Department, Officer Raphael Cancio of the Portland Police Department, Sgt. Jerry Flowers of the Oklahoma City Police Department, Sgt. Tom McMahan of the Chicago Police Department, Det. Victor Bond of the Harris County [Texas] Sheriff’s Department, Officer David Auther of the Fort Worth Police Department, Lt. Loren Evenrud of the Minneapolis Park Police, and Patrolman Kurt Cottrell of Layton City [Utah] Police Department; to name but a few.

As you have noticed by my opening, my method of understanding the nuances of gang of culture is through the popular music which appeals to the gang member of today-rap. I will be using this method to expand your knowledge of gang culture as I continue through this missive.

The music which defines the gang member in the 90s is routinely referred to as “gangster” or “gangsta” rap. It is a powerful means of expression which clearly describes the lifestyle, motivation, and aspiration of the inner-city minority (i.e., black/Latino) gang member. The correlation between this music and lifestyle is clearly evident when one takes the time to open the doorway offered by the lyrics and enters to experience the world through their eyes. It is a world devoid of beauty as those of use in the mainstream would perceived of such a notion. It is a world which, in its own way, is very a “jungle” (gangster rappers refer to their communities, the inner-cities, as “concrete jungles” or “concrete Vietnams”). It is a world filled with pitfalls at every turn, where a hard stare (known as “mad-dogging”) can initiate gunfire between two non-verbal combatants. It is an environment where the mind-set of the jungle warrior-the guerilla fighter-is as necessary towards survival in the land of the concrete as it was for members of the military’s Special Forces in the sweltering jungle underbrush of southeast Asia. This music paints a portrait of that world which allows for the accessing of information

from the mind of what some in the criminal justice system have referred to as “urban terrorists.”

Among the ideals-the “G-code”-subscribed to by those caught up in the rapture of the criminal street gangs (one that strikes at the heart of the idea that America is in the grip of a “civil war”) is the belief by the inner-city minority gang member (and one that is avidly adopted by the non-minority suburban youth as well) that they exist in a “state of war” with the government structure which binds us as a nation.

Subscribing to the “G-code” means that you believe that mainstream America, with its white conservative dominated political control over the various institutions of government, views you as expendable refuse with no sense of value towards the betterment of society and no means to elevate from the depths to the heights of the social strata. They feel a sense of social and economic deprivation which is made doubly so by the psychological government (most notably the police) and the educational system which, under the guise of learning, validates this sanctioned governmental abuse. The rappers will cite that they are not learning “history” about themselves as people of color, but rather are being subjected to “history”-the notion of white supremacy and subjugation of any dissenting opinion (i.e., rap music) directed at exposing the wrongful shame of American apartheid. That, gentlemen, is but one of the notions which prompts me to assess the situation in this country with criminal street gangs being akin to a “civil war.” What I cited above is typical of the thinking of inner-city minority gang members and is a major recurring theme in the lyrics of so-called “gangsta” rap songs.

YOU NEED NOT AGREE WITH IT, YOU SIMPLY NEED TO UNDER-STAND IT!

Because the inner-city minority gang member feels alienated from the American mainstream (in part due to a sense of socio-economic deprivation resulting from the government’s failure to address their particular needs, which in their view contributes to the “state of war” between them), he seeks to establish himself by the same standards which governs socio-economic status in the mainstream. They too seek a place of honor and respect on the upper tier of the social ladder where power resides. They too seek to demonstrate their social standing with the material trappings indicative of success (i.e., a nice house, car, fine clothes, jewelry, et. al.). With the acquisition of social status comes honor and respect from your peers. Power completes this cycle of successful achievement in mainstream America.

The 90s gang member who rejects all semblance of mainstream conformity, ironically strives to validate himself through the ideals that have long been a part of the framework of America. For example, America has traditionally been a male-oriented society. Evidence of that can be seen in the gender make-up of Congress. Gangs, too, are a male dominated society. America is a society grounded in the spirit of individualism, capitalistic desire which results in materialistic need, a self-indulgent quality of narcissism, and a healthy dose of violence. The creed of gang members can be summed up in the words frequently used by the rappers: “It’s all about the money (capitalism), the women (ego/narcissism), the jewelry (materialism)...and guns (violence), fuck the rest.”

A central theme in the life of the inner-city minority gang member, especially within the black gang community, is the desire to make money. Much in the way of gang crime and reputation building is based on the quest to “make bank.” This ideal is not too difficult to comprehend when one looks deeply into the nature of the gang member’s existence.

Traditionally the inner-city minority gang member comes from a highly dysfunctional (in comparison to the “norm” of mainstream existence) background. In many instances this

dysfunctionality spans across generations. One of the legacies of this generational anomaly is that of resigned acceptance to the underclass world of disenfranchisement, poor or non-existent educational standards, lack of job opportunities and, to escape the sense of hopelessness, an affinity for alcohol and drugs. The quest for the latter is often fueled by an avid participation in a life of crime. Eventually the effort to escape the social quagmire of this existence revolves around one thing-money, money, and “mo’ money.” As expressed by rap pioneers Grandmaster Mele-Mel and Scorpio (formerly of the group Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five) in the song BROKE ASS NIGGAS, “...it ain’t no joke being broke:”

...PUT YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR
‘CAUSE A BROKE ASS NIGGA DON’T CARE
I NEED A LITTLE CHANGE FOR MY CAR
WHAT, NIGGA WHAT SOMEBODY MUST GET STUCK
SO PUNK GIVE IT UP

... JACK MOVES TRICKS LOSE IF THE MONEY DON’T MOVE

‘CAUSE IN THE NAME OF KEEPIN’ IT REAL TILL MY NEXT MEAL
...DEALS WITH HOT LEAD AND COLD STEEL
I’M FROM THE BOOGIE, IN THE BOOGIE DOWN BABY
BUT BEFORE I WAS BOOGIEING I WAS DOWN AND OUT...AND SHADY

EVEN IF YOU’RE MY HONCHO...
WHEN I LEAVE YOU BLOODY LIKE O.J.’S WIFE, FORD BRONCO
EVEN BROKE ASS BITCHES AIN’T NOTHIN’ TO FUCK WITH
THEY MIGHT HAVE TO SCREW A PUNK THEY GREW UP WITH
SO BEWARE OF BROKE NIGGAS WHO WANT RICHES

OR YOU’LL BE GETTIN’ STITCHES AND SLEEPIN’ WITH THE FISHES, YOU SON-OF-A-BITCHES
BROKE ASS NIGGAS AIN’T NOTHIN’ TO FUCK WITH
MIGHT HAVE TO KILL A NIGGA I GREW UP WITH
EVERYDAY SOMEBODY’S SINGIN’ THE BLUES
‘CAUSE A BROKE ASS NIGGA GOT NOTHIN’ TO LOSE
...SO GET OUT THE TRUCK, GET UP ON THE WALL
YOU ABOUT TO TAKE A FALL
NIGGA GIMME IT ALL

‘CAUSE I’M COMMUN’ STRONG, AND I PULLOUT FAST
YOU ABOUT TO GET STUCK LIKE A DICK IN YOUR ASS
BROKE ASS NIGGAS AIN’T NOTHIN’ TO FUCK WITH
MIGHT HAVE TO KILL A NIGGA I GREW UP WITH
EVERYDAY SOMEBODY’S SINGIN’ THE BLUES

‘CAUSE A BROKE ASS NIGGA GOT NOTHIN’ TO LOSE

IT'S THAT BALD HEADED NIGGA IN THE SWAMPS DRESSED IN BLACK
BODY COUNT STACKS
I STAY STRAPPED...CLICK, CLACK, CLACK
HEADS SPAT, THAT'S HOW THEM BROKE NIGGAS ACT

QUICK TO BRING IT TO ENEMIES SO DON'T TEMPT ME
RICH NIGGAS, AND JEALOUS ONES THAT ENVY
ROLLIN' WITH THE REAL HUSTLERS AND PLAYERS
BUT MORE CONNECT WITH CELLULAR PHONES AND INTERNATIONAL PAGERS
...THE CROOKED COPS RAIDING DRUG SPOTS

THE SHIT DON'T STOP, I KEEP THE HAMMER COCKED
BLASTING GUN SHOTS
RAGE IN YOUR FINGER
BECAUSE A RICH NIGGA BECOMES A SNITCH NIGGA
I DARE YOU TO MOVE, THIS IS A STICK-UP...

BRING DISASTER JUST LIKE WEATHER STORMS AND MAD RAIN
BREAKIN' NIGGAS UP LIKE HOUSES TRAPPED IN HURRICANES
BROKE ASS NIGGAS AIN'T NOTHIN' TO FUCK WITH
MIGHT HAVE TO KILL A NIGRA I GREW UP WITH
EVERYDAY SOMEBODY'S SINGAN' THE BLUES
'CAUSE A BROKE ASS NIGGA GOT NOTHING' TO LOSE

Street gangs are nothing more than a microcosm of American society (after all, for the most part they are, in fact, Americans). They are individualistic by nature (This is especially true of western gangs such as the Bloods and Crips, and is equally true of the gang culture in Utah). The spirit of capitalism and the need to express success in that arena through materialistic acquisition runs deep among the inner-city minority gang member. This ideal has been expressed by admitted Crip gang member and "Godfather" of the "gangsta" rap genre, Ice-T. In the song "New Jack Hustler," he proclaims:

GOT MY BLOCK SEWN, ARMORED DOPE SPOTS
LAST THING I SWEAT'S A SUCKER PUNK COP
MOVE LIKE A KING WHEN I ROLL...
YOU GOTTA DEAL WITH THIS 'CAUSE THERE'S NO WAY OUT
CASH MONEY AIN'T NEVER GONNA PLAY OUT

I GOT NOTHING TO LOSE, MUCH TO GAIN
IN MY BRAIN I GOT A CAPITALIST MIGRAINE
I GOTTA GET PAID TONIGHT...
KEEP MY GAME TIGHT
SO MANY HOES ON MY JOCK THINK I'M A MOVIE STAR

NINETEEN, I GOT A FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLAR CAR

GO TO SCHOOL, I AIN'T GOING FOR IT
KISS MY ASS, BUST A CAP ON A MOET
'CAUSE I DON'T WANNA HEAR THAT CRAP
WHY? I'D RATHER BE A NEW JACK HUSTLER

FOOL I'M THE ILLEST
BULLET PROOF, I DIE HARDER THAN BRUCE WILLIS
GOT MY CREW IN EFFECT, I BOUGHT 'EM NEW JAGS
SO MUCH CASH, GOTTA KEEP IT IN HEFTY BAGS
ALL I THINK ABOUT IS KEYS AND GEES

IMAGINE THAT, ME WORKING AT MICKEY DEE'S
THAT'S A JOKE 'CAUSE I'M NEVER GONNA BE BROKE
WHEN I DIE THERE'LL BE BULLETS AND GUNSMOKE
YOU DON'T LIKE MY LIFESTYLE-FUCK YOU!
I'M ROLLING WITH THE NEW JACK CREW

AND I'M A HUSTLER...
HERE I COME SO YOU BETTER BREAK NORTH
AS I STRIDE MY GOLD CHAINS FLY BACK AND FORTH
I CARE NOTHING ABOUT YOU AND THAT'S EVIDENT
ALL I LOVE IS MY DOPE AND DEAD PRESIDENTS

SOUND CRAZY, WELL IT ISN'T
THE END JUSTIFIED THE MEANS, THAT'S THE SYSTEM
I LEARNED THAT IN SCHOOL THEN I DROPPED OUT
HIT THE STREET...AND NOW I GOT CLOUT
I HAD NOTHING, AND I WANTED IT

YOU HAD EVERYTHING AND YOU FLAUNTED IT
TURNED THE NEEDY INTO THE GREEDY
WITH COCAINE MY SUCCESS CAME SPEEDY
GOT ME TWISTED, JAMMED INTO A PARADOX
EVERY DOLLAR I GET ANOTHER BROTHER DROPS

MAYBE THAT'S THE PLAN AND I DON'T UNDERSTAND
GODDAMN, YOU GOT ME SINKING IN QUICKSAND
BUT SINCE I DON'T KNOW AND I AIN'T NEVER LEARNED
I GOTTA GET PAID, I GOT MONEY TO EARN...
WITH POSSE OUT ON THE AVE.

BUMP MY SOUNDS, CRACK A 40 AND LAUGH
COOL OUT AND WATCH MY NEW BENZ GLEAM
IS THIS A NIGHTMARE, OR THE AMERICAN DREAM
SO THINK TWICE IF YOU'RE COMING DOWN MY BLOCK

YOU WANNA JOURNEY THROUGH HELL WHEN SHIT GETS HOT

SO WHAT IF SOME MOTHERFUCKER GETS SHOT
THAT'S HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED, ANOTHER BROTHER SLAIN
THE WOUND IS DEEP
BUT THEY'RE GIVING US A BAND AID
MY EDUCATION'S LOW, BUT I GOT LONG DOUGH

I'M RAISED LIKE A PIT BULL, MY HEART PUMPS NITRO
SLEEP ON SILK, LIE LIKE A POLITICIAN
LOCK ME UP IT'S GENOCIDAL CATASTROPHE
THERE'LL BE ANOTHER ONE AFTER ME-HUSTLER

In their quest to live up to mainstream ideals, to achieve the “American Dream,” they will resort to illegal (i.e., illegitimate) means as a path to legitimacy. In its own way being a gang member is a pathway to that sense of mainstream “nirvana” This idea plus the disregard for education (as provided by mainstream institutions) as a means out of the cycle of inner-city dysfunctionality addressed by rapper Ice Cube in the song “Gangsta’s Make The World Go Round:”

GANGSTA’S AND GIRLS MAKE THE WORLD GO ROUND
NO HESITATION I CAN RUN A NATION FROM INCARCERATION
30 YEARS IS WHAT I’M FACING
BUT GIVE ME 7Cs AND 11 GEES
I’LL MAKE ENOUGH CHEESE TO BRING WALL STREET TO ITS KNEES

NIGGAS PLEASE, I GOT ENOUGH GUNS
TO FILL THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING FULL OF ONES
GO TO SCHOOL IS WHAT THEY TELL US
BUT NIGGAS IN SCHOOL IS SCARED OF THE GOODFELLAS...
THAT’S HOW IT IS AND THAT’S HOW IT’S GONNA BE

KIDS WHEN YOU GROW UP WHO THE FUCK YOU WANNA BE
LIKE, YOUR BLACK SUPERHERO
GOT ENOUGH ZEROS TO HIRE BOB SHAPIRO....

Again, they feel that dream is elusive from their grasp by virtue of the war waged against them by the very system from which they seek acceptance. As cited in “New Jack Hustler,” this paradox is their personal nightmare.

To their way of thinking the paradox is a part of a systematic master plan engineered by the forces of the mainstream. It is a plan for the complete uprooting of the inner-city minority community through government induced genocide. In this vein the forces of government fuel the conflict within their community by inciting red vs blue (i.e., Blood vs Crip) or brown vs black (i.e., Hispanic gangs vs black gangs), et. al.

As expressed by the rappers, black on black violence furthers the agenda of the white-led government forces and rather than allowing the minority community to achieve the Robin Leach (“Lifestyles of the Rich & Famous”) maxim, “Champagne wishes and Caviar dreams,” they instead are kept in the miasmic world of “Triple beam wishes and 40 ounce dreams” (i.e., drugs and alcohol). **YOU NEED NOT AGREE WITH THIS PREMISE, YOU SIMPLY NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE THINKING OF THOSE THAT DO!**

How do these individuals feel about the consequences of their actions in pursuit of the American Dream, behavior which brings about the destruction of the community’s infrastructure, and which is a form of self-genocide furthering the cycle of civil unrest?

The sense of hopelessness felt by the young in these communities fosters an attitude that is explicitly referred to in rap lyrics as, “I don’t give a fuck!” This attitude fuels the “thug lifestyle” which gang members-minority and non-minority alike-subscribe to as their model for living in **Amerikkka**. The thugish, roguish gang member does not care about you or yours. He feels disconnected from the greater community of which he is a part because to his way of thinking that society has long ago given up on him. As a result of this lack of emotional bonding the adherent to the “thug” way of life strolls through life with an outlook that was adequately expressed in a 1990 rap song:

I DON’T GIVE A FUCK
NOT A SINGLE FUCK
NOT A SINGLE FUCK, SOLITARY FUCK....!

Their disregard for the feelings of others (except their “homies”-fellow gang members) and disconnection from the American mainstream helps them spurn any concern for the consequences of their negative, self-destructive, and often illegal behavior. This was adequately expressed in the song, “Neighborhood Jacka:”

I’M A NIGGA WITH AN UZI STRAIGHT CUT
I’M JACKIN’ MOTHERFUCKERS ‘CAUSE I DON’T GIVE A FUCK
FUCK LAW AND ORDER YOU THE COPS AIN’T SHIT
I’M JACKIN’ NIGGAS MOMMAS SO THEY CAN SUCK DICK
I’M JACKIN’ MOTHERFUCKERS ‘CAUSE I GOTTA MAKE A LIVING

...I CAN’T GET A JOB IT’S A GODDAMN SHAME
THE COLOR OF MY SKIN DON’T AFFECT WHAT’S IN MY BRAIN
I’M KICKIN’ SKANLESS SHIT ‘CAUSE THE GOVERNMENT SUCKS
THEY KEEP US BROKE AND HOPELESS SO I STILL DON’T GET MY CUT
IT’S A GODDAMN SHAME I GOTTA JACK AN OLD LADY

I GOT THREE BABIES AND IT’S DRIVING ME CRAZY
I CAN’T LET ‘EM STARVE SO I HIT YOUR HOUSE AT NIGHT...
A FULL FLEDGED GEE ON THE WARPATH PUNK
YOU BETTER THINK DUCK WHEN I STEP TO MY TRUNK....

The issue of respect, which is so crucial to a gang member’s personal reputation and social standing among his peers, has sent many to their deaths because they did not fear the

consequences of defying a rival bent on challenging that “rep.” In such cases the consequence of having one’s “rep” tarnished (thereby losing respect and social standing) is more threatening to the gang member than the prospect of losing (or taking) a life.

What of the consequence of arrest and eventual jail or prison time? The gang member will do everything he can to avoid arrest and incarceration (including intimidating witnesses, a subject to be discussed later), however when confronted with the prospect, like virtually everything else in their world, they will turn the negative into a positive.

In their world incarceration is not necessarily something to be avoided, but rather embraced. In the social order of their world incarceration, especially prison time, is an enhancer to their reputation, a noble journey-badge of honor to be worn with pride.

Because of criminality inherent in their world the prison experience is inevitable. In many cases prison becomes a place for family reunion. In my years of working on the gang issue in Utah I have dealt with young people-gang members who simultaneously had cousins, brothers, and uncles in the same prison facility. These young people looked up to their jailed family members with a respect bordering on idolatry. As such they embraced the idea of going to jail because it allowed for reuniting of kin. As warped as this thinking may seem to those of us raised with the notion that breaking the law and its aftermath was a negative experience to be avoided at all costs, it is a mind-set that must be understood in the course of drafting legislation to address the rising crime in America.

So many legislative bodies across the country have resorted to the “adultification” of juveniles in their efforts to reign in the increasing crime wave of so-called “superpredators.” In this reign the age for classifying juvenile offenders as adults subject to adult penalties has been lowered to, in some cases, fourteen (14). Is this necessary or effective?

Because of the occasional high profile crime involving juveniles there is a perception on the part of the public that the rise in crime is due to these “superpredators.” Studies have shown, however, that juveniles account for approximately 10% of all violent crime in the country; a figure that, according to a report by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, has not changed in approximately 30 years. This false perception, however, has not deterred elected officials from responding to constituent concerns regarding juvenile crime by advocating extremely tougher measures to curb its negative impact. This is especially true of juvenile gang members.

An example of this extreme was expressed to me by a member of the Utah State Senate. His solution to our gang problem was to build an encampment in an area of the state’s west desert with a ten foot high electrified fence. The juvenile gang offenders would be warehoused in this enclosure at the mercy of the electric current running through the fence. Should they dare challenge the fence they would be instantly executed. He was adamant about the seriousness of this proposal because those housed in this setting had given up their right to exist in mainstream society. He emphasized that those offenders deserving of this “rehabilitation” were from the state’s minority population (i.e., black, Latino, Polynesian and Asian), with a few coming from the dominant white majority. He lent credence to the perception offered in this missive that a civil state of unrest exists in this country..... except that in his scenario the white majority were being victimized by the minority underclass. The irony to his “fantasy” solution was that in the Salt Lake City area the majority of identified gang members are adults (18 and over) as opposed to juveniles.

These legislative “get tough” measures have not been shown to have any impeding effect

on crime, in general, and juvenile crime, in particular. In some cases an argument could be made that some of these measures (i.e., California's "three strikes and out" law) have had the unintended effect of contributing to the civil war I speak of.

The rappers bemoan the fact that the "system" has forced the "hell" of the inner-city experience on them. As expressed in the song, "Heaven or Hell," by New York rapper Raekwon (a member of the group Wu Tang Clan):

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IN, HEAVEN OR HELL?
WE DON'T BELIEVE IN HEAVEN 'CAUSE WE'RE LIVING IN HELL

The "system" then aggravates the situation by responding to their efforts to rise above the negativity in their lives by penalizing them for wanting a slice of the "American Pie" (though obtaining that slice may be by illegal means). To their way of thinking the punitive aspect of mainstream America's response to their minority "stepchildren" has only served to heighten the tensions between them. In their lyrics they have fused the "don't give a fuck" outlook on life with the punitive, living finality of the "three strikes and out" law. In this vein the violent nature of their day to day existence is exacerbated by the realization that if the third strike is going to go in effect then why not use violence (especially towards law enforcement) because there is nothing to left to lose.

In reality the "get tough" measures being bandied about will probably not have any great debilitating effect on public safety measures in the country. As a career law enforcement officer I favor **anything** that will allow police officers to be more effective in executing their duties "serve and protect" the public interest. I favor **any** legislative measure that will make the entire criminal justice process more efficient from the standpoint of the law abiding citizen and more fearful to the criminal offender. The recent wave of legislative responses, however, raises serious questions regarding their true benefit and whose (or what) agenda prospers as a result.

Take, for example, the much publicized Crime Bill of 1994. It was meant to address the rise in crime by putting 100,000 more police officers on the street and by making it harder to obtain firearms as violence reducing measures. In fact the police chief and mayor of one Utah community took the national emphasis in this area and fused it with the public's concern over a spate of violent incidents in their community involving gang members and guns to tout their personal agenda of changing the law pertaining to the purchase of firearms from state control to municipal control. Their position was that if the local jurisdictions had control over firearm sales then the violence level would be drastically curtailed (especially that involving gang violence). The fallacy to this position was that the guns being used in gang related crime were not being purchased through legal channels with that specific intent. They were, in fact, being obtained by those committing the crimes through the under-ground (i.e., black) market through residential and business burglary and theft.

The Crime Bill addressed the subject of gang violence by banning the purchase and sale of assault weapons. The fallacy to this position was not that assault weapons were specifically addressed—they needed to be the focus of some legislative initiative. The fallacy to this position lay in the politically laden media sound bites touting this initiative as a major step in curbing gang violence in the country, especially within the inner-city minority community. The reality was that throughout the country gang violence as a result of assault weapons (i.e., AK-47, Uzis, Mac-10, Tec-9, et. al.) was minuscule in comparison to that involving small caliber handguns

(especially the highly touted Glock 9mm, a favorite lyrical tool of the rappers).

As noted by Sgt. McBride and cited in my 1995 year end status report on criminal street gangs in Utah, approximately 93% of gang related homicides in the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department reporting area involved firearms of which approximately 76% were from small caliber handguns as opposed to approximately 6% involving assault weapons.

Inciting public outrage and concern over the destruction to life and limb as a result of "weapons of war" is no major public relations problem to elected and appointed officials. It should be vented. However, addressing the same issue with the more prevalent small caliber weapons which account for a far greater number of shattered lives would be tantamount to political suicide because of the powerful gun lobby. So instead a smoke screen in the form of assault weapons is addressed, thereby giving the public a false sense of security and elected officials much needed fodder for campaign image building.

Perhaps the most egregious example of the legislative response to the rise in crime is the belief that putting more people in jail/prison will ease the public's pain of victimization. The influx of business has resulted in the privatization of the penal institution, making it one of the most profitable business ventures in the country. It has made fortunes for those businessmen who wallow in the misery of others. Unfortunately for the inner-city minority, they, too often, represent that "other." Legislative "get tough" measures all too often go hand in hand (or is it hand in pocket) with the privatization of the penal colonies in this country. The federal sentencing guidelines for crack cocaine versus the powder variety is a prime example.

As a career law enforcement officer and former narcotics investigator I believe that addressing the crack problem and its decimating effect on the American way of life is vitally necessary. However cocaine in any form has had, and will continue to have a debilitating effect on all aspects of American society by those who use, possess, or distribute it. The sentencing discrepancy is frequently applied in rap lyrics to show that in spite of its claims to being a fair and just society, the American judicial system is heavily weighted in favor of those with the "money and power" (to quote from a song by the same name). It is a system, they say, that prefers to focus on powerless inner-city minority crack fiend who is on the back end of the cocaine express food chain, instead of the powerful white importer who controls the switch that sets that engine in motion. **Cocaine is cocaine and the basic laws of math still dictate that 500 grams is greater than 5 grams.** The numbers game should not be used by a "fair and just" system simply for political gain.

All of these issues-inconsistent and unbalanced sentencing guidelines, privatization of prisons, and other "get tough" legislative measures such as the "adulthood" of juvenile offenders fuels the fiery perception by inner-city minorities that America, as an institution, is resorting to "gangsterism" against them. The rappers, in turn, add to that inferno of discontent by raging against a system that calls for the silencing of their voices (as expressed in the song, "Hand of the Dead Body," by Scarface):

...THEY CLAIM WE THREATS TO SOCIETY
AND NOW THEY CALLIN' ON THE GOVERNMENT TO TRY TO MAKE SOMEBODY
QUIET ME

...SO WHY YOU TRY TO KICK SOME DUST UP
AMERIKKKA'S ALWAYS BEEN KNOWN FOR BLAMIN' US NIGGAS FOR THEIR FUCK
UPS

AND WE WERE ALWAYS CONSIDERED EVIL.

NOW THEY'RE TRYIN' TO BUST OUR ONLY CODE OF COMMUNICATING WITH OUR PEOPLE

...WHY YOU CRITICIZE ME FOR THE SHIT THAT YOU SEE ON YOUR T.V. THAT RATES WORSE THAN P.G. JUST BRING YOUR ASS TO WHERE THEY GOT ME SO YOU CAN FEEL THE HAND OF THE DEAD BODY

...DAVID DUKE'S GOT A SHOTGUN SO WHY YOU GET UPSET 'CAUSE I GOT ONE A TISKIT-A TASKET, A NIGGA GOT HIS ASS KICKED SHOT IN THE FACE BY A COP-CLOSED CASKET AN OPEN AND SHUT SITUATION

COP GETS GOT, THEY WANNA BLAME IT ON MY OCCUPATION ...THE SHIT THAT I BE SAYIN' AIN'T NO WORSE THAN NO WESTERN MOVIE DON'T BLAME ME, BLAME YOUR MAN GOTTI SO YOU CAN FEEL THE HAND OF THE DEAD BODY ...YOU PUNK NIGGAS MAKE SICK

SCARED OF REVOLUTION, NEED TO START DOUCHIN' ...BUT I BUST TWO TIMES TO THE GUTS ...NOW YOU'RE DISSIN' ME FOR PUBLICITY ...SO FUCK BILL AND HILLARY, ICE CUBE, IT AIN'T NO KILLING ME

All of these issues promote the civil conflict between two opposing castes of Americans- the white mainstream majority versus the inner-city underclass minority, separate and unequal. All of these "get tough" measures fail in one great respect-they address the crime issue from the back end (after the damage to society has been done) instead of focusing on the front end (during the formative years of the youthful development). As I cited in my 1995 report, "...the back end cost of incarceration and rehabilitation efforts far exceeds that of the front end cost of prevention and intervention."

As noted in that report, figures obtained from the Third District Juvenile Court in Salt Lake City showed that an average sentence of eight (8) months in a secured facility cost Utah taxpayers approximately \$35,280.00 per individual. The annual cost for incarcerating one (1) adult in the Utah State Penitentiary was approximately \$22,000.00. In comparison Neighborhood Housing Services, a well established prevention/intervention program with a proven record of success in turning the lives of "troubled/at-risk" youth around for the betterment of society, does so at a cost of \$22.00 per day (the average length of stay in the program is four months for a total cost of \$1,500). NHS includes a job training component (building construction) as a part of its overall program and requires its participating youth to maintain at least a C average in high school during the length of their tenure.

The importance of prevention/intervention efforts was stressed by Chicago Police Department Sergeant Tom McMahan, a 17 year Gang Specialist, during his presentation at the 1995 National Gang Conference in Anaheim, California. He pointed out that without early

prevention/intervention efforts an impressionable child more easily succumbs to the addicting lure of the criminal street gang culture. In a short period of time that child reaches the upper echelon of the culture known as “hard-core.” To quote Sgt. McMahon:

“Once a kid obtains ‘hardcore’ level or status in a gang, there is nothing we’re (society) going to do to change his path. There is no program we’re going to come up with-the school system, religious groups, the help of any city agency-to stop this kid. He is into the gang **now** for the long haul.”

Taxpayer dollars would be better served if spent on preventative measures which, if effective, could forestall the development of a child into the thug lifestyle of gangs as a viable alternative. Un-fortunately supporting this agenda represents the ideological antithesis of the privatized prison industry. In the political climate of today it is not in the best interest of elected officials to advocate prevention and intervention efforts over the building of more prisons for human warehousing. To do so would be a political death knell.

To those unfamiliar with the dynamics of the gang culture and the inner-city minority community from which street gang members have traditionally come from (such as Utah State Senator previously referred to, as well as a substantial number of congressional members and mainstream Americans), prevention programs hold no great appeal. **Building more prisons and then allocating resources towards filling them will not break the cycle of criminality which has, unfortunately, become a way of life to many inner-city minority youth.**

Does my advocacy of prevention/intervention programs reflect an indictment of arrest and incarceration as a viable weapon in the war against criminal street gangs and juvenile violence? On the contrary I, like my colleagues throughout the country whose time is specifically dedicated towards impeding the growth of the street gang culture in American society, wholeheartedly endorse the arrest and incarceration of those convicted of serious, violent, and heinous crimes. It is not necessarily the criminal justice system that has failed society, but rather the attitude of society towards the juvenile offender which has failed.

For example, why have the so-called “superpredators” found their niche in life by means of preying on those they consider weaker than they? Could it possibly be because the juvenile justice system in this country has failed to instill the notion that acts in violation of society’s rules carry punitive consequences, and then impose that penalty to the fullest extent to demonstrate that “crime does not pay?”

I have dealt with juvenile offenders who have told me they would continue in their life of crime until after their 18th birthday, at which time they would become subject to the more stringent adult system. Such attitude clearly indicates a lack of respect for the juvenile justice system. That accounts for the use of juveniles by adult gang members to commit crime. The adults know that the lenient nature of the juvenile courts will, in all likelihood, simply slap the offender on the wrist with an admonishment to “don’t do it again.” **A legislative “get tough” initiative which Congress should consider is severe penalties for those adult predators who prey on youth to commit crimes on their behalf as a means of circumventing the stricter adult criminal justice system.**

Sadly, this lack of respect, as it has pertained to Utah’s system, has often been justified:

Case #1-A 17 year old gang member uses a sawed-off shotgun to shoot a rival gang member in the stomach. The victim lives-a clear case of attempted homicide-but his attacker is sentenced to 6 months in a juvenile facility. The light sentence reflects the court’s belief that the

shooter can benefit from rehabilitation efforts imposed by the court. This in spite of the shooter's extensive rap sheet of 30 arrests of which half involved violence and several of those involved weapons (including firearms).

Case #2- A 17 year old gang member charged with two counts of attempted murder with a handgun (A bullet barely missed a baby laying in its crib) is sentenced to 30 days in a juvenile facility.

These are but two examples of the "system's" failure to impose a consequence that would get the juvenile offender's attention and impress upon him the notion that crime, indeed, does not pay. In the words of the rappers, however as illustrated by these examples, "crime **does** pay."

The America of today, gentlemen, is very much a panic driven society due, in large part, to over-sensationalized media coverage of high profile criminal events and politically inspired rhetorical hype in response to such events. The response most used by law enforcement administrators in my state is that of "zero tolerance." Simply put, zero tolerance means the arrest of an individual involved in gangs for any offense no matter how insignificant (i.e. possession of tobacco by a minor, drinking beer in public, et. al.) the offense may be in relation to the violent aspects of the events creating the public concern. The zero tolerance strategy is a "get tough" rhetorical response to appease a frightened public. The zero tolerance approach will generate a high degree of arrests statistics but as indicated, much of these will be insignificant in terms of impacting the increasing juvenile/gang crime rate. These meaningless statistics will ultimately find their way in an official statement touting the effectiveness of law enforcement in the "war" against gangs.

Zero tolerance-strict enforcement of the letter of the law-assumes the issues associated with the gang culture are as simple as black and white. They are not! In particular the zero tolerance approach eliminates an investigator's ability to assess the black and white aspects of a given situation and to render an informed decision in the best interest of the community. Zero tolerance as a "get tough" measure fails to take into account that in some instances more can be gained in the way of serving the best interests of the public's concern and safety by eliciting information (i.e., intelligence) from gang members about themselves and dynamics that governs the "natural" order of things in their world.

Accepting this philosophy requires an understanding of gangs from a human and humane perspective. As I stated in my 1995 statewide report on gangs:

"...By understanding the many facets of gang culture, the temptation to depersonalize the individuals involved is reduced and/or eliminated...depersonalization-defining someone as being less than you-opens the door to indifference and acceptance of violence as a natural and justifiable response...Depersonalization impedes any effort to control the negative impact gangs have on society exacerbating an already deplorable condition. It desensitizes the emotional response to the individuals involved in the culture by seeing them as something outside the realm of the 'normal' human condition and thus not worthy of empathy...**It is imperative that a human face be applied to those who subscribe to the gang culture. It is also important that a humane attitude towards them be applied by those who deal with them on a regular basis. Towards this end**

there should be a greater emphasis on intervention/prevention programs as a means of reducing future needs for detention and correctional facilities...” (p. 31)

In the politically charged partisan climate of 1990s America advocating anything less than the total enforcement of the letter of the law is enough to incite heated invective from those entrenched in the philosophy of zero tolerance. Failure to toe the zero tolerance line is seen as a “break” in the ranks of the “thin blue line.” Advocating any alternative other than that preached by law enforcement administrators as “divine mantra” is seen as “selling out” the brethren in blue, of being a “social worker” instead of a cop.

Because I advocated a holistic approach to addressing the gang problems in my state, gentlemen (most notably in the most concentrated area of its existence), I was subjected to the verbal persecution cited above. My position was challenged under the premise that the role of law enforcement was to investigate, arrest, prosecute, and incarcerate (which it is); not to involve itself in sociological matters such a prevention and intervention. Again, as I stated in my 1995 report:

“As society changes, the nature in which it is victimized by those choosing to live outside its legal parameters also changes. Law enforcement must learn to adapt to these changes. We must continue in our traditional role (‘hook ‘em-book ‘em’), but we must also recognize that the effectiveness of such an approach is limited...” (p. 32)

In order to adequately address the rise in crime especially gang related crime, there must be a balanced blend of prevention/intervention with incarceration. Any emphasis of one over the other is destined to fail. The politicians who tout incarceration as the panacea to violent crime, in their own way, contribute to its proliferation. As previously mentioned incarceration is quite often embraced by those living the thug life. It is an experience that helps establish reputations and reinforces those already made. Incarceration is needed but it should be tempered with prevention and intervention. **The cycle of crime as a way of life must be addressed at the beginning of the journey, not at its end!**

And what of the subject of witness intimidation, the primary focus of this hearing? Approximately four years ago I was asked by homicide detectives with the Los Angeles Police Department to assist them in an investigation involving members of the 89th Street Family Blood gang. These detectives felt this gang had been involved in several unsolved homicides, one of which was tied to a witness in another investigation. One member of this gang who went by the street name of “Sinister” was a rapper who had released an album titled “Mobbin’ 4 Life.” The detectives felt some of the songs on this album made references to those unsolved cases and asked for my assistance in transcribing (and deciphering) the lyrics for their use in the investigation. One of these songs, “Put A Snitch In The Ditch,” clearly illustrates the attitude of the gang member toward those who would impede upon his effort to achieve the “American Dream:”

ONCE UPON A TIME ON THE EASTSIDE
THERE WAS 9 HOMIES THAT WAS DOWN TO HOO RIDE
ONE OF THE HOMIES WAS A BIT SOFT
BUT, THE OTHER HOMIES WAS STRAIGHT UP NUTS

THEY COULD ALWAYS DEPEND ON THE OTHER

NOTHING BUT HOMEBOYS BUT MORE LIKE BROTHERS
ONE DAY THEY DECIDED TO DO A LICK
BUT SOMETHING WENT WRONG, THE POLICE HAD A GOT A TIP
ONE TIME SHOWED UP AND SPOILED THE WHOLE SHOW
THE PARTY WAS OVER AND IT WAS TIME TO GO

IT ALL ENDED IN GUNPLAY
THE SOFT HOMIE GOT CAUGHT BUT THE OTHER 8 GOT AWAY
NOW THIS IS WHERE THE PROBLEM BEGINS
IF HOMEBOY SNITCH, THEY ALL GOING TO THE PEN
BUT IF HE DO HE GONNA SLEEP WITH THE FISHES

‘CAUSE SNITCHES LIE IN DITCHES
(Chorus) DIG A DITCH FOR A SNITCH
THEY READ THE HOMIE HIS RIGHTS
AND TOLD HIM IF HE DON’T SNITCH, HE’S GONNA HAVE TO DO LIFE
I TOLD YOU THE BOY WAS SOFT

THE COPS PULLED IT OFF, THEY MADE THE LITTLE CHUMP TALK
THEY KICKED EVERYBODY’S DOOR IN
BUT ONE FOOL SLIPPED AWAY AND HIS NAME WAS “SIN”
AND I KNOW I’M ON A WANTED LIST
WITH ONE THING ON MY MIND, I GOTTA KILL THE WITNESS

SNITCHES LIE IN DITCHES IT’S A WELL KNOWN FACT
IF ANYBODY TELLS YOU THAT THEY DON’T ...
IT’S BEEN A FACT FOR DIMENSIONS
SNITCHES BEEN GETTING SMOKED SINCE PROHIBITION
DON’T LET NOBODY TELL YOU THAT THEY DON’T

‘CAUSE 9 TIMES OUT OF 10, I BET YOUR HE WON’T SNITCH
LIKE HE BEEN TELLING YOU TO DO
AND THAT GOES FOR THE GODDAMN COPS, TOO
(Chorus) DIG A DITCH FOR A SNITCH
I GOTTA GO ON A MISSION

TO CATCH THIS FOOL WHO THINKS HE’S GONNA BE SNITCHING
SNEAK A...9 MONTHS BEEF
SO I GOT...AN ALIAS NAME AND WAS A TRUSTEE
STRAIGHT ON A COUNTY JAIL SYSTEM
STALKING MY PREY AND LOOKING FOR A VICTIM

...NOW I GOT TO GET TO 1750 WHERE THEY KEEP ALL THE SNITCHES AT

WORK MY WAY TO THE WINDOW
...I PULLED MY SHANK AND THE FOOL GOT STUCK
(Chorus) DIG A DITCH FOR A SNITCH

Utah has had its share of witness intimidation on the part of gang members. The most tragic example was a case in which a young man sleeping on his living room floor was shotgunned to death. The shooter, who fired through an open window late at night, was acting behalf of one of his “homeboys” locked up in the Utah State Penitentiary. The tragedy to this was that the victim was not the intended target.

There have been other examples of witness intimidation in the Utah gang scene, but this one is the most glaring as to the lengths they will go to continue in their life of crime to protect the “rep” they have established, and to show that any disrespect to their “rep” will not be tolerated. That a rap song would be written to chronicle such an event only goes to show just how important the issue is to those in the thug life and why it should, likewise, be important to those of us charged insuring the public’s safety and welfare.

As a society, gentlemen, we should use every resource at our disposal to deal with the criminal element plaguing this country. But we have to recognize that strict enforcement of the law, in and of itself, has not-does not work. For proof of this we need only look at the cities of Los Angeles and Chicago. They have been allocating resources in this area for generations and yet the problem has grown exponentially. Does this mean that the law enforcement effort has failed? No!!! It simply shows the magnitude of the problem, how adherence to the gangster way of life has become an accepted part of youth culture in American society. Throughout the country young people flocking to embrace the ways of the gang culture as their means of self-expression. It is a phenomenon that has slipped the traditional boundaries of the inner-cities and its heavy minority population to become an accepted part of the lifestyle of mainstream American youth. In the rural heartland and white suburbia gangs have the “in” thing for young people to be a part of. This in spite of the aggressive enforcement efforts that have been waged against the beast over the years in places like Los Angeles and Chicago. Clearly, enforcement alone will not stem the tide of gangs assimilating into the fabric of the mainstream American quilt. I say again, there must be a balanced blend of strict enforcement with prevention/intervention efforts if any abatement of this tide is to be seen.

In regards to the “civil war” I have addressed in my statement, the promotion of a social revolt within the “colonies” (i.e., rap rhetoric for the inner-cities) of America, it is a truism that should be taken seriously by those charged with maintaining the public safety? The rappers and their supporters believe this “state of war” exists frequently call for the marshalling of forces in the upcoming battle against the modern day tyranny of the various institutions of American government.:

I’M SEEIN’ BODIES IN THE ALLEY AND BLOOD IN THE VALLEY
FROM THE SHORES MAINE ALL THE WAY TO COMPTON, CALI
I’M CALLIN’ RALLY TO THE HOMIES IN THE STREET LIFE
TAKE A REAL CLOSE LOOK AT WHAT IT LOOK LIKE...
WHEN THE REVOLUTION COMES I’M A BE UP FRONT
WITH MY FINGER ON THE TRIGGER OF A MOSSBERG PUMP
WHEN THE REVOLUTION COMES I’M A BE STRAIGHT LOC

GOING OUT IN A CLOUD OF PISTOL SMOKE...

The people writing these lyrics may be relatively young in age, but they are old in terms of what the social conditions they speak of has done to them. The systemic problems which have created the need for gang culture as an alternative way of life for young people, especially those from the inner-cities, is endemic of a society that has lost its moral compass. Is that loss unique to a certain community or socio-economic class of people? The answer is no. The people who are generational products of inner-city living (regardless of whether they had to have opportunities to escape that lifestyle) have the same hopes and dreams for their young as do those of us whose lives unfold in the mainstream. The rappers are not making up the things that they say, though in some instances they clearly are exaggerating way beyond the scope of reality. When they talk about the decimated social conditions of their world it is because they have experienced its horrors first hand. When they talk of their “don’t give a fuck” attitude towards life it is because they have seen death and destruction up close and personal and have become desensitized to the point that it no longer matters. When they talk of government abuse, especially in the realm of police abuse of authority, it is because they have the history of FBI infringement upon the constitutional rights of those they (the rappers) look upon as leaders in the movement for civil and social equality. One need only look at the congressional hearing into the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. in which it was clearly established that under the authority of J. Edgar Hoover the FBI targeted the black civil rights leaders of that era-Dr. King, Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam, Huey Newton and the Black Panther Party, et. al.-by illegal wiretaps, fabricating information about them and then releasing that information to the public domain in order incite public opinion against them, et. al.

The subject of controlling what the rappers say through legislation (i.e., interstate commerce laws, violation of the first amendment, et. al.) Is frequently brought up. What they say has even been likened to yelling fire in a crowded theater. My response is really quite simple: If society is willing to condemn the words emanating from this particular socio-economic class of Americans, is it also prepared to condemn similar intonations coming from other, more upper scale elements of that same society? If Congress legislates against so-called “gangster” rap is it also prepared to legislate against the forces of talk radio (many of which preach the conservative agenda which is the bulwark of the current Congress). Can we truly condemn the rappers who yell, “Fuck the Police,” and then ignore the likes of conservative talk show host G. Gordon Liddy who proclaimed on the air that the agents of AFT were “jackbooted thugs” who should have bullseye painted on their heads? This about an agency that is held in the highest regard by gang investigators across this nation because they have taken initiative (as has DEA on a slightly smaller scale) to work with local and state agencies in addressing the growing gang problem.

The respect shown to AFT was evident during a 1994 Street Gang Symposium sponsored by the Justice Department’s National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC). NDIC brought sixteen law enforcement gang “experts” together (of which I was one) to address the street gang problem (with emphasis on Bloods and Crips) from a national perspective. As expressed by the participants in the published report:

“A number of the symposium participants view the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (AFT) as the most productive (and cooperative) federal law enforcement agency working street gang matters with state and local law enforcement....” (p. 3)

Unlike a sister agency in the federal law enforcement family, AFT does not assume an “elitist” attitude when they interact with city, county, and state investigative agencies. They have been avid partners in the education of law enforcement as to the nature of criminal street gangs. This has been through two national gang conferences they have co-sponsored since 1992 with the California Gang Investigators Association on the west coast, and MAGLOCLEN (one of the federally funded Regional Information Sharing Systems) on the east coast. It is my belief that law enforcement in general and the American public in particular owe a great deal of thanks to AFT for being the first among federal law enforcement to actively address the rising crime among gang members and to do so in a way the epitomizes what interagency cooperation-local, state, and federal-is all about.

I would argue that the words of G. Gordon Liddy are, perhaps, more inflammatory because he has long been a member of the mainstream establishment (including service with the FBI) and as such should be expected to uphold the honor and integrity of the law enforcement community of which he was once a part. On the other hand, however, I would expect such behavior from the rappers and gang members because they, as a matter of routine, have never shown any affinity towards the police. To them, we are, in fact the enemy.

There are those in the mainstream who would attack the rappers on the premise that they are fostering a lack of respect for the role of law enforcement by instilling within the minds of American youth the idea that the police are worthy of ridicule and contempt. These individuals conveniently forget media portrayals of the police such as those depicted in the Burt Reynolds movies of “Hooper, Smokey and the Bandit, and Cannonball.” In these movies (the “hero”) openly taunts law enforcement agencies across several state lines, flaunting his contempt for the law by racing across the highways of America at outrageous speeds while guzzling beer and romancing a female (Academy Award Winner Sally Field) sitting in his lap as he drives. Police cars crash all around him in their effort to bring him to justice. The exploits of the police in their pursuit of Reynolds’ character is that of sheer buffoonery. Is the comedic depiction of the police in these movies less inclined to foster a lack of respect for law enforcement than the more caustic depiction lyrically painted by the rappers?

America, gentlemen, needs to heed the words of these rappers whether we like what they say (and how they say it) or not. They are speaking to us of an apocalyptic society that threatens to implode upon itself.

America, gentlemen, is engaged in a civil war that is not simply the discontent of the inner-city minority community expressed in the form of gangs and the exhortations of the rappers. That discontent is, likewise, coming from the far right in the form of the various incantations emanating from the white hate groups which dot the rural landscape. In this regard the “urban terroristic” actions of the minority gang member, as expressed by the rappers, in no way equals the carnage which resulted from the event which occurred in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995. What form of music inspired Timothy McVeigh to commit the ungodly act that he did? That has not been explored and in all likelihood will never be explored. Why not? Could the lyrics of a particular song have triggered Timothy McVeigh to destroy the lives of innocent babies, men, women and their surviving family who must forever live with the pain caused by that explosion. What is known about his musical taste (from those who stood watch over him during his incarceration leading up to his trial), however, is that rap and “gangsta” rap were not a part of his listening pleasure. He was known to prefer country and rock (both of which, in some

cases, say the exact same thing as the rappers though not as strongly worded with profanity and sexual explicitness). Is Congress prepared to legislate against The Grand Ole Opry, and institution as “All-American” as mom’s apple pie?

The national debate on the issue of rap music as a contributor in the wanton violence among the youth culture in America, especially that of the inner-cities, has always been one-sided. It centers on the music of inner-city minority youth, created by inner-city minority youth, for inner-city minority youth (**not** the whites of the rural heartland and suburbia). If this debate is to take place then it should, like politics in general, be inclusive-that is to say that other aspects of the entertainment media that may be more appealing mainstream tastes, but are as much a contributor to the dysfunctional nature of American society resulting in its moral loss and physical destruction should also come under scrutiny.

The rappers, gentlemen, are, in their own unique way, speaking to us of ways in which the structure of American society can be more inclusive to those who have long been separated from the fold. They simply ask for inclusion into the affairs of mainstream society, for a piece of the All-American pie (and not necessarily through illegitimate means). Currently, their “legitimate” way of grabbing that slice exists through the rap music industry, what they refer to as “legal dope.”

I maintain, gentlemen, that the rappers should not be condemned for the negative harshness of their words. They are not the source. Those who control the American music industry-those white executives of the major recording companies in this country-are the ones who should face condemnation and censure. They are the ones who have made it profitable for inner-city minority youth to vent their frustration at their social condition and status in life and to become celebrities in the process. They are the ones who have created the “cult of personality” that defines the rappers and their lifestyle and which the multi-media have seized upon to inspire America’s youth culture. Condemn the industry moguls, gentlemen, but listen to the words of their proteges because in them the nature of this “civil war” can be understood and hopefully addressed in a way that is beneficial to all Americans. Thank you.