



CITY OF WILLIAMSBURG

Police Department

Investigator M.L. Craighill, Special Operations Bureau

425 Armistead Avenue, Williamsburg, Virginia 23185-3651

(757) 259-7205 / Fax (757) 259-7204

E-mail: lcraighi@williamsburgva.gov

Gang Presentation Speech Notes

Kiwanis Club

4/13/11

Scope of the problem:

I need you to take me seriously when I tell you we are about to discuss a problem so severe that its mere existence – just the idea itself, the concept of this issue alone - is sufficient to lead otherwise intelligent, ambitious young men down a path of destruction, to cause them to swear out oaths in secret, to take up arms, to commit to actions that find them entering neighborhoods and homes of others with intent to commit murder...and carrying out these actions – all in the name of this concept. The idea or concept I am referring to is gangs.

I am speaking of a force that is, perhaps, second only to drugs in its power to corrupt. And worse yet, gangs often are interconnected with the drug issue in every negative way – from involvement with the allure of easy wealth from selling, to the personal and family ruin that comes with its use. Indeed, many prospective gang members are fallout victims of the drug trade, with family members missing and out of their lives due to its cycle of devastation.

Drugs require the physical product in order to begin its deadly cycle. Gangs require no thing – no physical resource, nothing at all, except the concept of gangs itself, and a mind ready and willing to accept this concept. And as I stated before, gangs are a deadly serious business with a deadly serious result on the lives of those affected by its influence.

So I am here today telling you about a problem, but I am ultimately asking you a question – how does one fight against an idea? I do not have all the answers, this is not a rhetorical question. I am here to tell you I, we, the police, and your society, need your help in solving this problem.

Let's change gears and try to get a grip on our problem on a smaller scale. Let's try to image ourselves in a place of risk, in one idea of an ideal breeding ground for the concept of gangs, and perhaps develop some insights by this process...

A "single member" scenario – imagine a young man, without example/leader/model, trying to make his way...negative influences all around, drugs, theft, guns, poverty, lack of success, lack of hope, and some older guys that you are afraid of and therefore forced to "respect"...confronted daily, in the most personal way, by those that see you/know you/deal with you on a daily basis, you have to "fit in" or be rejected...you want to succeed, you want to be "respected" by your

peers, you want to have things...you have no one telling you this is wrong, certainly no one doing so who is really a part of your life, much less showing you another way...

Add to this a growing, and powerful image, from media and general society, of a “heroic” figure – who succeeds (has money, women, respect, power), has power and authority (guns and intimidation, the ability to get things and get things done), and has “romantic” image (from youthful counterculture...rap lyrics, movies, video games). Bloods and Crips, Gangster Disciples, Black P Stone, Latin Kings, MS-13...names capture attention – from dread, due to reputations of violence and mystery...not just a single man who has done something wrong – but an “organization,” or even bigger – a secret society that claims to have truths and seeks to recruit new members and grow and gain influence and power...its not against the “blood” laws...right and wrong blurred and perverted. How would you expect this person to behave/react, under these circumstances? That fatherless lad...with all these negative influences...

Gangs fill a void in society for youth, mostly male youth. Void from growing fatherless society – either absent completely, or through drugs, alcohol, criminal violations, or other – is not present or able to guide and develop a positive influence. Youth seek a transcendent cause (a noble purpose, greater than themselves), feelings of value and worth, and an identity.

Gangs give both – through false promises. Promises of success – a way to obtain worldly goods – the media/the world we live in, etc shows such things as a goal in of itself (wealth, things, etc). Promises of respect – fear from others, and thereby power and influence over them. Promises of an identity and purpose - false history/culture, “secret society” with rules and opportunities for “promotion” that the gang member can “belong to” and a cause – the gang’s goals – that transcends his own and gives a false sense of nobility of purpose.

Selecting from among the poor and disenfranchised, Gangs take the most vulnerable. He has “nothing to lose,” and “everything” to gain...false promises/distorted reality.

Typically, looking from the outside in, we say this is someone else’s fault, someone else’s problem, someone else’s worry. 1st – denial of the problem (not here, that’s a west coast issue, etc), then a dismissal (those aren’t real gangs, that’s not a big problem, we haven’t seen any “major” crimes, we can’t prove this is for the “benefit” of the gang...etc), then an avoidance of responsibility (this isn’t in my neighborhood, this isn’t my child, this isn’t our area of expertise, let someone else handle it, etc)...then...too late. Your car is broken into. Your house is burglarized. You are robbed in the parking lot. Not just the people in that poor project over there...YOU are afraid to go walking outside, or you are afraid for those you love... The shooting spills over to your house, your child is the victim.

Then we start over again, assigning blame, avoiding responsibility. We go back to that fatherless lad. Is it dad’s fault? Courts say no – we charge even juveniles as adults – bearing the same penalty for their actions as adults – depending on the severity of their crimes – father issues notwithstanding. Reality says its not dad’s fault too – i.e. that son commits a murder – ultimately the son makes his own decisions. But what if that son had learned early on that there were values higher than that of the gangs, that there are basic truths of right and wrong, that there was another option, another hero to follow, another way...

If not from dad, who might be able to show him that way? That is why I am speaking to you, the leaders of our community for the good, those that choose not to sit idly by in the presence of evil in our society, the intimidation and corruption of others, of our children, but to take action...and leaders show the way...

But first we must be aware of the problem. Now you are aware of the problem...How to help?

The front lines are with people like Joe Ash (local martial arts/TKD school), social workers, who are seeking in outreach to mentor and give positive examples and influence in the lives of at risk youth. Or with probation, trying to redeem and return to society, or with pastors and churches trying to get the message out, or with the police in ending cycles of violence and seeking truth. Or with YOU, others who seek to solve the problems, assist these processes, or in their own way provide a positive example, who take responsibility and act as leaders...

Our success against gangs will be won or lost in our ability as a community to be clear and firm in our response, and not allow any room for escape or to hide for gangs, both directly in terms of members within and among us, and indirectly – in rejecting this concept of gangs as a “mainstream” or acceptable thing on any level...

Questions...

Who am I?

EXPERIENCE

Sworn Law Enforcement Officer with Williamsburg Police Department since November 2000

Assigned to Criminal Investigations/Special Operations Bureau since November 2003

Assisted the in preparation of cases and the appurtenant indictments for presentation to the Grand Jury for various narcotics investigations, property and violent crimes, homicides and gang related crimes

SPECIALIZED TRAINING

Completed gang training, sponsored by the California Gang Investigators Association, the United States Department of Justice and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, July 2007

Completed specialized, elite gang enforcement detail sponsored by “South Gangs” (Los Angeles Police Department’s Operations South Bureau Gang Enforcement Detail), focusing on multi-jurisdictional enforcement and intelligence sharing, July 2007

Completed gang training through the Virginia Gang Investigators Association earning a Certification as Gang Specialist, April 2007

Completed specialized MS-13 gang training sponsored by United States Department of

Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, June 2006
Completed specialized training through the Drug Enforcement Agency July 2005

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Director of the Colonial Area Gang Intelligence Network since 2007
Member of the Virginia Gang Investigators Association since 2006
Member of the California Gang Investigators Association since 2007

GANG RELATED INVESTIGATIONS

Began investigation of the area's first gang crimes and conducted arrests in those cases in 2005.

Conducted numerous search warrants and other special operations specifically targeting suspected gang members during criminal investigations with Williamsburg Police and for regional enforcement efforts, leading to arrests, successful prosecutions, and the acquisition of gang-related criminal intelligence.

Certified as "expert" regarding courtroom testimony related to criminal street gangs.

GANG INSTRUCTION AND PRESENTATIONS

Established and direct the Colonial Area Gang Intelligence Network (CAGIN), a regional, multi-jurisdictional coalition of law enforcement and other agencies to combat gangs. Hold regional monthly intel meetings and coordinate specialized operations against gangs such as probation and parole "gang sweeps."

Testified in Williamsburg and York County Circuit Courts as a gang "expert" in probation violations and criminal matters concerning gang activity and culture.

Organized outreach program for troubled youth, partnering the Williamsburg Police, Williamsburg Human Services, and a local martial arts school.

Conducted numerous presentations and training sessions in many parts of Virginia regarding criminal street gangs.