Old Problem, New Eyes:
Youth Insights on Gangs in New York City

A REPORT BY PUBLIC ADVOCATE BETSY GOTBAUM
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Executive Summary

Despite the fact that New York City, the largest city in the country, continues to enjoy low crime rates, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) reported an 11 percent increase in the number of "gang-motivated incidents" between Fiscal Years 2005 and 2008.

Public officials, elected officials, police officers, journalists, and researchers all have different views of the issue of gang violence. The one perspective that is almost always omitted from the discussion of gangs is the youth perspective. In recognition of this omission, the Office of the Public Advocate surveyed youth, predominantly from neighborhoods with known gang activity, about gangs in New York City. The findings of this survey were included in a working paper released in November, 2007 titled *Old Problem, New Eyes: Youth Insights on Gangs in New York City*. The paper also includes a brief history of gangs in New York City, a discussion of what defines a gang and gang membership, and a brief review of major anti-gang legislation under consideration.

Following the release of the paper, the Office of the Public Advocate held a series of round table discussions with students, educators, community leaders, elected officials, and city officials on the issue of gangs. The purpose of the round tables was to bring together a variety of perspectives—with an emphasis on the youth perspective—and to identify practical recommendations for addressing the problem of gangs in New York City. This updated addition of *Old Problem, New Eyes* includes an addendum that discusses the insights and recommendations that came out of these events

The Office of the Public Advocate collected 348 responses to the 2007 survey. The following are the major findings:

- Approximately two-thirds (233) of all respondents believed that there are more gangs than there used to be.
- More than one-third (128) of all respondents considered gangs a problem in their schools. Nearly half (166) considered gangs a problem in their neighborhoods.
- More than two-thirds of all respondents (236) stated that they noticed people in their schools wearing gang colors or sporting some type of accessory, such as "flags," identifying them as gang members.
- Nearly half (169) of all respondents said there was tagging and graffiti in their schools. More than two-thirds (237) of all respondents said there was tagging and graffiti in their neighborhoods.
- The majority of respondents (184) used negative words like "violence" and "crime" to define a gang.
- The majority of respondents (271) were ambivalent about why people join gangs.
- The most common recommendation for preventing youth from becoming involved with gangs (58) was for the city to provide more summer jobs and programs.

Recommendations:

- Shift resources to alternatives to detention programs, which have lower recidivism rates and are more cost effective than juvenile detention.
- Close the under-capacity Bridges Youth Detention Center and use the savings recovered to help fund alternatives to detention.
- Review the use of community policing strategies and identify additional opportunities for police officers engage young people, their families, neighbors, churches, and schools as part of anti-gang efforts.
- Create a public/private fund to preserve and expand youth programming.
- Create a youth programming guide and website to keep youth and parents informed and help Community Based Organizations (CBOs) build stronger working relationships.
- Encourage youth programming that meets the specific needs of the community it serves through the Request for Proposals (RFP) process.
- Create opportunities for youth to participate in violence prevention efforts, including a summit or series of summits and a Youth Manifesto for New York City expressing beliefs, rights, goals, and specific measures for improving police and community relations.

Introduction

Despite the fact that New York City, the largest city in the country, continues to enjoy low crime rates, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) reported an 11 percent increase in the number of "gang-motivated incidents" between Fiscal Years 2005 and 2008.[1]

Public officials, elected officials, police officers, journalists, and researchers all have different views of the issue of gang violence.[2] The one perspective that is almost always omitted from the discussion of gangs is the youth perspective. In recognition of this omission, this summer, the Office of the Public Advocate surveyed youth about gangs in New York City.

The findings of this survey were included in a working paper released in November, 2007 titled *Old Problem, New Eyes: Youth Insights on Gangs in New York City*. The paper also includes a brief history of gangs in New York City, a discussion of what defines a gang and gang membership, and a brief review of major anti-gang legislation under consideration.

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A Brief History of Gangs in New York City

Dating back to the 1820s, the Forty Thieves of New York is thought to be the first youth street gang in America, though some historians believe American street gangs existed in pre-revolutionary days.[3] In the late 1800s, the Bowery Boys, Dusters, Kerryonians, Plug-Uglies, Roach Guards, and Shirt Tail gangs, among others, emerged from the Five Points area of downtown Manhattan. Gang activity, or at least public attention to gang activity, waned from the start of the 20th century until after World War II but picked up again in the 1950s.

Gang activity in New York City reached its pinnacle from the 1950s to the late 1970s as the city experienced mass migrations of Latinos from Puerto Rico and African Americans from the South.[4] Upon arrival, these groups clashed with each other and with Italians and

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[1] Mayor's Management Report, September 2008. This number reflects a 20 percent decrease from FY2007 to FY2008.

[2] Soulliere, N., "*Youth Gangs: Various Views, Random and Varied Strategies*," The Research Centre: Canadian Police College, 1998.

[3] Sheldon, R. G., et al., *Youth Gangs in American Society*, Toronto: Thompson Wadsworth, 2004.

[4] Schneider, E., (1999). *Vampires, Dragons and Egyptian Kings: Youth Gangs in Postwar New York*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Irish and other poor white ethnic groups. Each group took up residence in specific, ethnically segregated neighborhoods, carving out "turf" in what was a rapidly changing city. Some of the more notable gangs of this era were the Chamberlains, the Mau Mau's, the Baldies, Pagans, Nordics, Boca Chicas, and Imperial Lords.

The most prominent gangs in New York City today are the Bloods, Crips, Latin Kings, and MS-13. The New York iteration of the Bloods was formed in the mid-to-late 1990s by African Americans in Rikers Island jail seeking protection from the Latin Kings.[5] The Crips, by some accounts, arrived in New York City in the late 1980s by way of Belize.[6] There is no evidence that either the New York Crips or Bloods are associated with their older counterparts in Los Angeles. The New York Latin Kings was founded in 1986 by Luis Felipe, a prisoner at Collins correctional facility in upstate New York. In the 1990s the NYPD and FBI labeled the Latin Kings the most violent gang in New York City.[7] Under the leadership of Antonio "King Tone" Fernandez, however, the Latin Kings changed their name to the Almighty Latin Kings and Queens (ALKQN) and attempted to recast themselves as a political street organization modeled on the Black Panthers and the Young Lords.[8] MS-13 or Mara Salvatrucha (slang for "shrewd person") is made up primarily of Salvadorian immigrants who came to L.A. during the Salvadorian Civil War (1980-1992). More recent Salvadorian immigrants affiliated with MS-13 have spread to other areas of the country including Suffolk County, Long Island, Newark, New Jersey, and the Flushing area of Queens.[9]

Gangs and Gang Members

One of the most contentious issues in the study of youth crime is the definition of a gang.[10] In what is widely considered the first text on gangs, *The Gang* (1927), Frederick Thrasher defined the gang as "an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict."[11] Gang researcher John Hagedorn notes that in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s the definition shifted to emphasize the criminal behavior of gang members, effectively making the definition of a gang a law enforcement issue.[12]

The New York City Police Department defines a gang as "a group of persons, with a formal or informal structure that includes designated leaders and members, that engages

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[5] *See* 22

[6] East Coast Association of Gang Investigators, Inc., www.gripe4rkids.org/crips.html.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] From the documentary, "Black and Gold: Latin King and Queen Nation," *A Big Noise Film:* 1999.

[9] MS-13 is more prevalent in areas of Long Island and New Jersey and in New York City is found almost exclusively in Eastern Queens and some parts of the Bronx. However, a recent *Time* magazine article labeled MS-13 the "most dangerous gang in America" and cited several high-profile incidents of violence associated with the gang.

[10] Miller, W. B., "The Growth of Youth Gang Problems in the United States: 1970-1998," Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Washington, D.C., April 2001.

[11] Thrasher, Frederic, *The Gang: a Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927.

[12] Website of University of Illinois-Chicago Professor John Hagedorn, http://gangresearch.net/Archives/hagedorn/articles.html.

in or is suspected of engaging in unlawful conduct." (See Appendix B for legal definitions of a "gang" and "gang member").

In recent years, researchers have returned to the Thrasher definition in recognition of the fact that "ganging" is a social activity in which all adolescents are involved to some degree.[13] The central problem addressed by much current gang research is determining at what point the typical behavior—delinquent and otherwise—of groups of adolescents ends and gang activity begins. *Youth Gangs in American Society* poses a series of questions that illustrate this fundamental problem: "*If four youths are standing on the corner or simply walking down the street, is this a gang? If these same youths hang out together frequently and occasionally engage in deviant activity, does this mean they are a gang? Or, if a youth lives in a neighborhood inhabited by gangs (but no one considers him a gang member), just happens to be passing time on a street corner with a gang member he has known for several years…is he therefore considered a gang member?*"[14]

The difficulty of these questions is indicative of the judgments law enforcement officials are often expected to make and underscores the possibility of misidentifying young people as gang members. *Youth Gangs in American Society* warns of the risk of falsely identifying youth as gang members on the basis of stereotypes.

The results of the 2004 National Youth Gang Survey, the most current survey available, indicate that there are approximately 750,000 gang members and 24,000 gangs located in 2,900 different jurisdictions across the country.[15]

For the most part, gangs have always been homogenous groups, and this is still true today. The vast majority of gangs are made up of African American and Latino youth between the ages of 8 and 23.[16] There are also Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodian, Filipino, Korean, and white gangs. In New York City, gang members typically live in neighborhoods that are isolated from the commercial centers of the city, such as Brownsville, East New York, Bushwick, East Harlem, Jamaica, and the South Bronx Grand Concourse. These neighborhoods are plagued by poverty, deteriorating infrastructure, failing schools, and scarce employment opportunities.

Gangs typically lack a formal order or code. The typical street gang amounts to an unstructured cluster of cliques, sets, pairs, loners, and "wannabes."[17] (See Appendix C for definitions of these terms). Gang members range from the "hardcore," who are strongly attached to the gang and have few interests outside the gang to "situation members," who join the gang only for certain activities, and "auxiliary members" who hold limited responsibility within the gang. It is important to note that the vast majority of gang-age youth who live in neighborhoods with gangs do not become members themselves.

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[13] *Ibid.*
[14] Sheldon, R. G., et al., <u>Youth Gangs in American Society</u>, Toronto: Thompson Wadsworth: 2004.
[15] U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, "Highlights of the 2004 National Youth Gangs Survey," 2004.
[16] *Ibid.*
[17] Klein, M.W., *The American Street Gang: Its Nature, Prevalence, and Control*, New York: Oxford University Press: 1995.

Major Anti-Gang Legislation Under Consideration

The Gang Abatement and Prevention Act of 2007 (H.R. 1582 and S. 456), which will be considered by Congress this fall, would, if enacted, greatly expand the role of the federal government in the prosecution of gang members and add the following measures:

- Make gang recruitment a new crime punishable by up to 10 years in jail.
- Make the commission of two gang-related street crimes punishable by up to 30 years in jail.
- Make it easier for prosecutors to try 16-year-olds as adults by establishing more severe penalties for youth identified as gang members.
- Require that gang members be given separate consecutive sentences for being gang members and for committing violence as part of a gang.
- Provide grants for private-sector entities to perform gang prevention programming.
- Provide grants to governments and non-profit agencies for programs to combat juvenile delinquency.[18]

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the bill would include a spending package of $1.1 billion, of which nearly $900 million would go to the law enforcement measures listed in the first four bullets above.[19]

Similar legislation has been introduced in both the New York City and State legislatures. Last spring the New York State Law Enforcement Council—comprised of the Attorney General for New York, Criminal Justice Coordinator of New York City, and Citizens Crime Commission of New York City, among others—issued a series of recommendations to the state legislature in collaboration with the State of New York Commission of Investigation. The recommendations included the following:

- Increased penalties for gang-related crimes;
- Additional resources for law enforcement including the authorization of roving wiretaps;
- Criminalization of gang recruitment.

These recommendations have been introduced at the state level in both the Assembly and the Senate through a series of bills.[20] The majority of bills introduced at the state level in the last three years focus on law enforcement. There are some, however, that focus on or include preventive and non-law-enforcement approaches to gangs. For example A5649 and A9895 require that all New York State teachers receive gang awareness training as part of their certification process. Bills A6294, A551, and S3863 include preventive measures.

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[18] The Gang Abatement Act of 2007, 110th Congress 1st Session, January 31, 2007.

[19] Congressional Budget Office Cost Estimate, S.456 *Gang Abatement Act,* July 2007.

[20] The list of bills in the NYS Senate and Assembly include: S6588, A6405, A6294, A10122, S6586, A8321, S6578, A10124, S1032, A10123, S6580, A8155, S7208, A1627, S1637, A11334, A1120, A1682, A1687, A1688, A1722, A2086, A2428, A4200, A4562, A4755, S1440, S1452, S1724, S1739, S2505, S2521, S2877, S3077, S3832, S3863, S3872, S4381, S5594.

Resolutions in support of specific state bills that call for stiffer penalties for gang activity and enhanced law enforcement have been introduced in the New York City Council (R0268, R0144, R0800, R1692, and R1471). Other legislation introduced in the Council aim to criminalize gang recruitment and loitering by gang members (Introductions 183, 458, 152, and 364). Resolutions in support of preventive approaches to gangs (R0056 and R0630) have also been introduced in the Council.

Methodology

At the end of each school year more than 40,000 youth between the ages of 14 and 21 from around the city are provided summer jobs through the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). The program is administered by the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). SYEP predominantly employs youth from low-income families.[21] More than three quarters of SYEP employees are non-white.[22]

At the end of June and beginning of July 2007, the various partners in the SYEP (e.g. New York City Housing Authority, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Alianza Dominicana, J.P. Morgan Chase, etc.) host job interview and registration events for prospective employees. The Office of the Public Advocate sent representatives to three registration centers—the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) office in Lower Manhattan, LaGuardia Community College in Queens, and the Alianza Dominicana office in Harlem—to survey youth waiting to register. These sites register students from every borough. The Office of the Public Advocate also sent representatives to survey students at summer school sites at John Jay High School in Brooklyn, Adlai Stevenson High School in the Bronx, and George Washington High School in Manhattan.

The seven-question survey was administered face-to-face. Respondents remained anonymous. Representatives approached youth standing in lines or waiting in waiting rooms. The Office of the Public Advocate collected a total of 348 responses. (See Appendix A for the survey questions.)

Findings

Approximately two-thirds (233) of all respondents believed that there are more gangs than there used to be. Some believed that there were not more gangs but more "sets" or "cliques" of the same gang.[23]

More than one-third (128) of all respondents considered gangs a problem in their schools. Almost half (166) considered gangs a problem in their neighborhood.

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[21] Report by the Center for an Urban Future, "Summer Help," June 2007.
[22] Department of Youth and Community Development, "SYEP Annual Report," 2006.
[23] This was a difficult question for some respondents because surveyors provided no context for the phrase "used to be."

More than two-thirds of all respondents (236) stated that they noticed people in their school wearing gang colors or sporting some type of accessory, such as "flags,"[24] identifying them as gang members.

Nearly half (169) of all respondents said there was tagging and graffiti in their school. More than two-thirds (237) of all respondents said there was tagging and graffiti in their neighborhood.

The majority of respondents (184) used negative words like "violence" and "crime" to define a gang. One hundred and forty-one respondents defined gangs simply as a group of people that "hang" or "chill out." Twenty respondents (about 6%) had a positive definition that included the idea of "family" and "looking out for one another." Nearly all respondents defined a gang as a group of people.

The majority of respondents (271) were ambivalent about why people join gangs. Many respondents (113) said people join gangs in response to "problems at home," including "abuse" and "neglect." Ninety-four respondents believed people join for "protection" or "safety." Forty-four cited peer pressure, and 12 said people joined out of a sense of boredom or having "nothing else to do."

The most common recommendation for preventing youth from becoming involved with gangs (58) was for the city to provide more summer jobs and programs. Programs mentioned included "after-school," "community centers," and general programs to "keep kids active." Twenty-eight respondents believed that "nothing could be done" and that "there will always be gangs." Twenty-seven respondents believed the police should do more. (Only 149 youth responded to this question.[25])

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[24] A flag is a handkerchief, usually red (Bloods), blue (Crips), white (Netas), or yellow and black (Latin Kings).
[25] Two different surveys—one with question 7 and one without—went to different SYEP and school sites, accounting for the smaller response.

Addendum—Round Table Discussion and Recommendations

To conduct the round table discussions, the Office of the Public Advocate partnered with Dr. David Brotherton, Professor of Sociology at John Jay College; Dr. Luis Barrios, Associate Professor of Psychology and Ethnic Studies at John Jay College; and Supporting Children Advocacy Network of New York (SCAN-New York), a grassroots organization that works with both gang and non-gang youth. The round tables were organized and promoted jointly by the Office of the Public Advocate and SCAN. Each round table was open to the public.

The first round table took place in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn on November 20, 2007, the second in the South Bronx Grand Concourse on January 23, 2008, and the third in Mott Haven section of the Bronx on May 29, 2008. The Public Advocate called on round table participants individually to talk about themselves and about gangs and to share any ideas they might have to improve their communities.

Each round table discussion was recorded and subsequently transcribed by Office of the Public Advocate staff. The discussion and recommendations below are based on these transcripts and the notes of Public Advocate staff.

In general, the round table discussions focused not on gang activity itself but on the causes of and responses to gang activity. Several themes emerged, among them criminal justice concerns, police relations, and community involvement and youth programming.

Discussion

Criminal Justice Concerns

Several round table participants talked about the time they spent in prison. They explained that gang affiliation in prison is often a matter of survival. Two former prisoners told separate stories attributing their survival and ability to stay out of jail to their gang membership. As a participant in the South Bronx Grand Concourse put it, "the Ñetas saved me."

Other participants spoke of being exposed to gang activity or engaging in the violent and criminal behavior often associated with gangs for the first time while in prison or juvenile detention. For example, one participant in the South Bronx Grand Concourse had this to say:

> —When I was 13 a judge sent me to a home [juvenile detention center]… That's where I learned what to pick up a gun was, what to do stick-up was, and how to bag dope. I didn't learn it in the street I learned it in the Department of Correction.

Police Relations

Gang members also expressed dissatisfaction with the way they are treated by the NYPD. More noteworthy was the frequency with which youth not affiliated with gangs and other members of the community expressed a similar skepticism and mistrust.

A mother of two in the Bronx said, "The cops have programs that are well advertised, but many parents don't want their kids connected to these programs because of the negative connotations that surround the police in the communities."

Many participants in the discussions spoke of the need for a renewed emphasis on community policing strategies that allow members of the community to build positive, lasting relationships with officers in their neighborhoods. A retired police officer contacted the Office of the Public Advocate following the South Bronx Grand Concourse round table to say that, in his view, neighborhood policing had all but disappeared and needed to return. He had been a member of the anti-gang unit, which was also the neighborhood police unit. If he was concerned about a young person in the neighborhood or suspected that the youth was part of gang, his first course of action was to reach out to the youth's family, clergy person, or teacher.

While the NYPD still uses aspects of neighborhood and community policing strategies, they can be overshadowed in the perceptions of residents by the zero-tolerance[26] strategies employed in the Impact Zones.[27]

The Office of the Public Advocate does not endorse the view that the NYPD is responsible for poor community relations. It is important to note, however, that gang activity in New York City takes place in a context in which many members of the community may resent NYPD tactics.

Community Involvement and Youth Programming

While youth not affiliated with gangs typically identified lack of economic opportunity and unstable home lives as justifications for involvement with gangs, gang members themselves were more likely to speak of gang activity as a form of participation in the community:[28]

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[26]http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/faq/faq_police.shtml#2 - The NYPD's "Zero-Tolerance" was instituted more than ten years ago. It focuses on the enforcement of "quality of life offenses" such as drinking alcoholic beverages in the street, urinating in public, panhandling, loud radios, graffiti and disorderly conduct. The intention of this policy is to send the message that more serious crime will not be tolerated. To meet the specific needs of their individual communities, local commanders have been granted significant authority and latitude in deploying their resources and implementing their own operations to help carry out this initiative.

[27] Program that increases the police presence in "high crime" neighborhoods. High crime areas are identified by the CompStat program.

[28] Again, the Office of the Public Advocate does not endorse the claim that gangs are a legitimate form of community participation. This claim is presented here to show how gang members perceive themselves.

—I'm more political than I've ever been. I have a better outlook on life. I'm 15. I'm not poor. I have a family. There are people like that in the [Almighty Latin Kings and Queens] Nation, and that's exactly what we're there for—to help those that need it. We have so much power when we unite.

—I'm seventeen years-old and been a Crip since I was nine. I've been through a lot, the good and the bad. We all go through a lot of tough times together…that's what it is about. We are not all about violence and murder, but that's what people think. The police never help. We help the community.

—The Ñetas was once considered the most dangerous gang in the city and now you don't hear anything from us. That's because we're organized to effect positive social change. I became a Ñeta when I was 16 and locked up in a Puerto Rican jail. The Ñetas saved me. They taught to understand my Puerto Rican culture and to understand the possibilities I had in life. The Ñetas work with other gangs and have been there with the Latin Kings, the Zulu Nation, and others on issues of social justice.

One point that youth, gang affiliated and otherwise, seemed to agree on was that their neighborhoods lack the programs needed to encourage constructive community participation.

Some representatives of CBOs confirmed that they lack the funding necessary to meet the demand for youth programming, such as academic help, athletics, job training, and conflict resolution. Other CBO and community representatives, however, indicated that, while under-funded, programs are also not well-suited to the needs and sensitivities of the youth they are intended to serve and are therefore under-attended.

At the Brooklyn round table, one youth program provider described a program offered in the Fort Greene neighborhood and asked the youth in attendance to sign up. A youth replied that he was from Fort Greene and had never heard of the program and asked where it was located. The provider said the office was in the police precinct, and the youth quickly replied, "I wouldn't go there." This exchange prompted a Ñeta member to ask, "Who would ever pay attention to that? Not the kids we need to be reaching…We have to make programs that are attractive to the kids."

Neighborhood schools offer a more viable location for youth services, but in the South Bronx Grand Concourse, a youth program provider noted that schools are not always receptive to working with CBOs:

—For five years we have offered to serve the community through the school we work at…We have the personnel and the expertise to work with the students in the school and to open that up and work with the larger community. We view the work we do in the school as community work—the school is part of the community. Unfortunately too many schools don't see it this way. They view

what happens in the community as something that takes place outside that school and that's all.

Recommendations

Criminal Justice Concerns

Shift Resources to Alternatives to Detention Programs

Some forum participants indicated that their affiliation with gangs or their involvement in the violent or criminal behavior associated with gangs began while they were in juvenile detention. To prevent such exposure, the city should devote greater resources to alternatives to detention (ATD), programs that provide youth with preventive services that are developmentally appropriate, culturally competent, and family-based.[29]

The rate of recidivism for juveniles continues to climb in New York City, reaching 48 percent in FY2008.[30] Recidivism for New York City juveniles sent to upstate detention facilities hovers around 80 percent.[31] By contrast, ATD programs have recidivism rates of between 18 and 35 percent[32] and are considerably more cost-effective. Detention costs approximately $215,000 per youth, per year,[33] whereas alternative programs cost approximately $15,000 per youth, per year.[34]

The Bloomberg administration has demonstrated a commitment to ATD[35], but a greater reallocation of resources would save the city money in the long-term and, more importantly, keep youth out of prison and on track to becoming productive citizens.

Close Bridges Youth Detention Center

According to the Department of Juvenile Justice, Bridges Youth Detention Center— formerly known as Spofford Juvenile Center—has been, "the focus of criticism and controversy. For a variety of reasons, ranging from administrative failures and staff abuses, to the physical limitations of the building, it became known as a place that exacerbated the problems of juvenile delinquents."[36] Additionally, the facility is located in the Hunts Point section of the Bronx and is not easily accessible by public transportation, making it difficult for families to visit their loved ones in detention. In 1998, the city built two additional juvenile detention centers, Crossroads in Brooklyn and

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[29] Physicians for Human Rights. http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/juvenile-justice/alternatives-to-detention.html
[30] Mayor's Management Report, September 2008
[31] Faruquee, M., "Taking the Next Steps in Juvenile Justice," *Gotham Gazette,* June 2, 2008.
[32] *ibid*
[33] *See 48*, the Cost of the detention per youth per day is $588
[34] Morais, B., "Close-To-Home Treatment for Youths Gains Notice," *City Limits Weekly,* July 7, 2008.
[35] Hernandez, N., "For Juveniles, Alternatives to Incarceration," *Gotham Gazette,* June 2, 2008 and Faruquee, M., "Taking the Next Steps in Juvenile Justice," *Gotham Gazette,* June 2, 2008.
[36] http://www.nyc.gov/html/djj/html/1957.html

Horizons in the Bronx, and made a commitment to close Spofford.[37] However, rather than closing Spofford, the city remodeled it and renamed it Bridges. Ten years later, the facility is still in operation.

Between 2005 and 2007 the number of youth sent to secured detention dropped 16 percent.[38] The city's three secure juvenile detention facilities are currently operating at approximately 72 percent of capacity, providing the city with further justification for closing Bridges and consolidating its detention facilities. While the centers are under-capacity, costs have not declined.[39] In 2003, the Correctional Association of New York calculated that closing Bridges would provide the city with $14 million in savings. Given the rising cost of detention, that amount is likely higher today.[40]

New York City should follow the example of the state Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), which, in response to the downward trend in admissions to secure facilities, closed three juvenile detention sites and consolidated two others.[41] Commissioner Carrion of OCFS has said that this move will save the state $16 million, which she will redirect to prevention and intervention service. The city should begin to phase out Bridges by sending all new detainees to its other centers and using the savings recovered to help fund ATD programs that reduce the need for juvenile detention facilities.

Police Relations

Review Community Policing Practices

The relationship between young people, the community, and the police is complex and not easily improved. While the NYPD may be employing community policing strategies, round table participants—including young people, a former police officer, and other members of the community—perceived a neglect of community policing in favor of more aggressive tactics.
To change this perception and more effectively combat youth violence, the NYPD should review its use of community policing strategies and identify additional opportunities to incorporate these strategies into anti-gang efforts. As part of this review, the NYPD should ensure that all officers engaged in anti-gang efforts are instructed and trained to engage the young people in the neighborhoods they serve and be familiar with and available to their families, neighbors, churches, and schools.

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[37] http://correctionalassociation.org/publications/download/jjp/spofford.pdf
[38] *See 48.*
[39] *ibid*
[40] According to the September 2008 MMR the cost of the detention per youth per day is $588 up from $520 in FY07.
[41] Morais, B., "Close-To-Home Treatment for Youths Gains Notice," *City Limits Weekly, July 7, 2008.*

Community Involvement and Youth Programming

Create a Fund to Preserve and Expand Youth Programming

The recent financial crisis has prompted the city to adopt a budget with many cuts to youth programming. Cultural After School Adventure and Out of School Time, two after school programs, were cut by $5.5 million and $2.6 million respectively.[42] Street Outreach, which trains workers to raise awareness of youth programs and recruit youth for anti-violence programs, along with its companion program The Neighborhood Youth Alliance, which connects youth with service projects such as cleaning parks and organizing immunization campaigns,[43] was cut by $1.1 million.[44] Many other programs, including the Adolescent Reentry Initiative, which helps youth transition from jail back to the community, lost all of their city funding.

Even in this difficult fiscal period, funding for essential youth services must be maintained and their services promoted. The city should create a fund, supported by private and corporate contributions, to preserve and expand youth programming.

Create a City-Wide Youth Programming Guide

At the Brooklyn round table, a clergy member suggested that the city create a guide to all the youth services available in New York City as a way of keeping youth and parents informed and helping CBOs build stronger working relationships. The guide would include locations and contact information, as well as detailed descriptions of the services that each CBO provides.

The Department of Youth and Community Development would distribute the guide through its Street Outreach[45] program at schools, churches, community centers, community events, city agency offices, police precincts, and shops. The guide would be accompanied by a website with a social networking feature that would allow CBOs to share best practices, ask questions, and find current research and information. This website would be hosted by the city but maintained by an independent organization in order to ensure the site's independence.

Encourage Youth Programming that is Responsive to Community Needs

For youth programming to be successful it must be adequately funded and publicized, but it must also meet the specific needs of the community it serves and be sensitive to the interests and concerns of neighborhood youth. The city should use the Request for

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[42] Citizens' Committee for Children of New York Inc., *Fiscal Year 2009 Adopted Budget for New York City: Summary of Restorations and Reductions to Vital Services to Children and Families.*

[43] Hicks, J.P., "Budget Battleground: Funds for the Young," *New York Times,* May 30, 1994

[44] Citizens' Committee for Children of New York Inc., *Fiscal Year 2009 Adopted Budget for New York City: Summary of Restorations and Reductions to Vital Services to Children and Families.*

[45] Street Outreach is a DYCD program, which trains workers to raise awareness of youth programs and recruit youth for anti-violence programs and has a companion program, The Neighborhood Youth Alliance, which connects youngsters with service projects such as cleaning parks and organizing immunization campaigns.

Proposals (RFP) process to encourage best practices in the development of youth programming.

For example, while many schools work with youth service providers, the potential of city schools to connect young people with valuable youth programming and services has not been fully realized. To maximize this potential, the city could issue an RFP for partnerships between city schools and multiple CBOs with the goal of tailoring job training; social/emotional services; and academic, cultural, and athletic enrichment programming to the needs of identified youth and bringing these services together under a single umbrella. Funding made available for these partnerships would benefit both CBOs providing services and the schools providing resources and support.

All RFPs for youth services should require CBOs to tailor their services to the specific needs of the communities they serve, demonstrate the ability to effectively engage families, provide social and emotional support services, and collaborate with partners. Programs should be evaluated according to the number of youth they serve, a quality review of services provided, and a survey of participants.

<u>Create Opportunities for Youth Participation in Violence Prevention Efforts</u>

Several round table participants associated their gang affiliation with community participation. In order to offer young people a constructive alternative forum for such participation, the city should hold a summit or series of summits with the purpose of developing a Youth Manifesto for New York City. This idea, proposed by Dr. Brotherton, would give youth the opportunity to voice their concerns and ideas and would help CBOs and city agencies better understand what types of programming appeals to youth and what approaches to the prevention of youth violence may be more effective than others.

The Youth Manifesto would include a statement of beliefs, rights, and goals, including specific measures for improving community and police relations. All young New Yorkers would be invited to the summit(s), giving them an opportunity to express their views to representatives of the NYPD, elected officials, and other adult members of the community.

Several organizations in New York City, including the Student Coalition Against Racial Profiling (SCARP)[46], the Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC)[47], Future Voters of America (FVA)[48], and the Youth Justice Board (YJB),[49] and others have already laid the groundwork for a large-scale project of this type.

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[46] http://ourdemandforjustice.org/site/about/
[47] http://urbanyouthcollaborative.org
[48] http://futurevotersofamerica.org
[49] http://courtinnovation.org

Appendix A—Survey Questions

1. What is the definition of a gang?

2. Why do you think people join gangs?

3. Is there gang tagging or graffiti in your school? What about your neighborhood?

4. Do people in your school wear gang colors, have tattoos, or wear clothing identifying them as gang members?

5. Would you consider gangs a problem in your school? What about in your neighborhood?

6. Do you feel that there are more gangs than there used to be?

7. What do you recommend the city do to prevent gangs from becoming a problem?

Appendix B—Legal Definitions of "Gang" and "Gang Member"

U.S. Code – Title 18, Part I, Chapter 26
§ 521 (a) **Definitions.—**
"criminal street gang" means an ongoing group, club, organization, or association of 5 or more persons—
(A) that has as 1 of its primary purposes the commission of 1 or more of the criminal offenses described in subsection (c);
(B) the members of which engage, or have engaged within the past 5 years, in a continuing series of offenses described in subsection (c); and
(C) the activities of which affect interstate or foreign commerce.
"State" means a State of the United States, the District of Columbia, and any commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States.

New York State – Article 120, Part 3
§ 120.06 Gang assault in the second degree and
§ 120.07 Gang assault in the first degree
A person is guilty of gang assault in the second degree when, with intent to cause physical injury to another person and when aided by two or more other persons actually present, causes serious physical injury to such person or to a third person.

New York City – As defined by the New York City Police Department
Gang: A group of persons, with a formal or informal structure that includes designated leaders and members, that engages in or is suspected of engaging in unlawful conduct.

Gang-Related Incident: Any incident of unlawful conduct by a gang member or suspected gang member.

Gang-Motivated Incident: Any gang-related incident that is done primarily:

      1)   To benefit or further the interest of a gang; or

      2)   As part of an initiation, membership rite or act of allegiance of support for a gang; or

      3)   As a result of a conflict or fight between gang members of the same or different gangs.

Appendix C – Glossary

Types of gang members from *Youth Gangs in American Society*:

Regular/Hardcore – Those who are strongly attached to the gang, participate regularly, and have few interests outside the gang (in other words, the gang is practically their whole life).

Peripheral members (*a.k.a. associates)* – Those who have a strong attachment to the gang but participate less often than the regulars because they have interests outside the gang.

Temporary members – Those who are only marginally committed, join the gang at an older age that the regulars and associates, and remain in the gang only a short period of time.

Situation members – Those who are very marginally attached and join the gang only for certain activities (avoiding more violent activities when possible).

At risk – Those who are not really gang members but are pre-gang youth who do not yet belong to the gang but have shown some interest.

Wannabe –A term gangs themselves often use to describe "recruits" who are usually in their preteen years and know and admire gang members.

Veteranos/O.G.s **or** *Original Gangsters* – Usually men in their 20s or 30s (or, in some cases, much older) who still participate in gang activities.

Auxiliary – Members who hold limited responsibility within a gang.

Gang classifications from *Youth Gangs in American Society:*

Hedonistic/social gangs **–** Involved mainly in using drugs and having a good time, with little involvement in crime, especially violent crime.

Party gangs **–** Relatively high use and sale of drugs, but with only one major form of delinquency (vandalism).

Instrumental gangs **–** Main criminal activity is committing property crimes (most use drugs but seldom sell them).

Predatory gangs **–** Heavily involved in serious crime (e.g. robberies and muggings) and the abuse of addictive drugs such as crack; some have much lower involvement in drug use and drug sales than the party gang; some are involved in the sale of drugs but not in an organized fashion.

Scavenger gangs **–** Loosely organized groups of youths preying on the weak in the inner cities, engaging in petty crimes and sometimes violence, often just for fun.

Serious delinquent gangs – Heavily involved in both serious and minor crimes, but with much lower involvement in drug use and drug sales than party gangs.
Territorial gangs – Associated with specific area or "turf" and, as a result, get involved in conflict with other gangs over their respective turf.
Organized/corporate gangs – Heavy involvement in all kinds of crime, including the use and sales of drugs; may resemble major corporations, with separate divisions handling sales, marketing, discipline, and so on; discipline is strict and promotion is based on merit.
Drug gangs – Smaller than other gangs, much more cohesive, focused on the drug business, with strong centralized leadership and market-defined roles.

Many prefer to describe the above gangs (except drug gangs) by using the term *street gang or street organization*. This is an all-inclusive term that refers to most of the types of gangs described above.