

STREET VS. "MAFIA" GANG PURSUIT: THE SOCIAL RACISM OF CONTEMPORARY CRIMINAL JUSTICE GANG POLICY

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ABSTRACT

Absent from the vast literature on gangs are the dynamics of racial and class centered policies of criminal justice gang punishment and pursuit. Scholars involved in gang research presume the objectivity of street gang policies today. The bias of the nation's gang policies appears unjustified given the failure of social policy and the high priorities which law enforcement agencies and the courts have applied to minority street gangs. The same institutions give relatively low priority to enforcing criminal laws against organized, rich, typically white, syndicate criminal gangs. In the absence of any credible basis for this dichotomy of gang policy today, we present an argument for "social racism" as the principle framework guiding this nation's criminal justice gang policies.

INTRODUCTION

Gangs, as an often deviant aspect of social structure, have been the subject of social research for at least the last seventy years (Yates 1995a). Thrasher's (1927) original insights on juvenile gangs during the 1920s provided not only a successful framework for studying the dynamics of these groups, but also helped stir public debate, social curiosity, and broad academic interest in the phenomenon of gangs. Gangs have evolved to an unprecedented level and range today. The early "near-group" structures, which defined most of the groups Thrasher studied, have given way to much more complex social and structural dynamics within gang groupings. The institutionalized arrangements defining more than a few urban gangs today are characterized by a level of group dimension that would be hardly recognizable to the early writers on metropolitan social gangs (Yates 1995a).

The irony of law enforcement agencies' aggressive and punitive approach to pursuing "street gangs," while at the same time relishing in a policy of toleration and quiet disregard concerning the offenses of powerful "Mafia" gangs, is that much of the basis for the harsh policies of street gang pursuit today find so little evidence justifying such policies. While law enforcement openly operates under the banner of seeing a strong connection between escalating violence among juveniles and the proliferation of youthful street gangs, the vast empirical scholarship establishes no strong link between juvenile gangs and the recent sharp increases in criminal violence among some juveniles (Fagan 1989; Howell 1994; Miller 1982).

Similarly, the popular images of street gangs spreading and expanding their numbers—and equally frightening for the public—expanding their trade in illicit drug operations, have also constituted a basis for the current

aggressive policies of street gang pursuit. When these images are matched with the evidence of gang migration and its alleged connection to an expanding urban drug trafficking network, the correlation fails to find any considerable basis in fact (Howell 1994; Miller 1982; Skolnick 1989). Most studies on street gangs find little evidence of gang unit relocations as a robust dynamic of inner-city urban neighborhoods in the 1980s and the 1990s (Hagedorn 1988; Howell 1994; Huff 1989; Maxson, Klein 1993; Miller 1982; Rosenbaum, Grant 1983). Further, what evidence there is of new drug satellite markets following migrating gang members to new locations has shown that these structures are tied largely to individuals and groups other than gangs (Goldstein, Huff 1993; Hagedorn 1991; Johnson, Williams, Dei, Sanabria 1988; Klein 1995; Skolnick 1989). While acknowledging gang involvement in drug trafficking at some level, the general consensus of the research is that drug trafficking involving gang members predominantly involves individual gang members in drug distribution networks which are neither gang-controlled nor reflective of organized gang activities (Decker 1993; Esbensen, Huizinga 1993; Fagan 1989; Goldstein, Huff 1993; Hagedorn 1991, 1994; Joe 1994; Klein 1995; Mieczkowski 1990; Williams 1989).

Street gang policy today, appears inspired by yet other images of high rates of homicidal violence on inner-city streets being largely a result of disputes involving street gangs over drug distribution territories (Howell 1994; Miller 1982). Prevailing evidence discredits the image of high incidences of inner-city homicide violence and its connection to drug trafficking street gangs. Most studies have simply failed to document extensive involvement of gangs in drug trafficking as an organizational activity (Bryant 1989; Howell 1994; Klein, Maxson, Cunningham 1988, 1991;

Miller 1982, 1994). Most salient to explaining homicidal violence involving street gangs are the disputes that revolve around gang turf, rather than notions of violence induced by gang-related street drug sales (Block, Block 1993; Howell 1994; Skolnick 1989).

On the other hand, the activities of large, rich, typically White, powerful "Mafia" and other syndicate criminal gangs have seemed more the deserving object for the tough law enforcement policies targeting the nation's gangs today. With an extremely efficient and secure hierarchy and structure to run the illicit trade generated by an unparalleled level of gang organizational activity and force found today, "Mafia" and other syndicate-style criminal gangs have clearly warranted the most intense surveillance, police pursuit, and criminal court scrutiny employed in the policies directed toward gangs and other organizationally-related criminal activities. Yet criminal justice agencies have not given priority to the pursuit of prominent syndicate gang structures. Why this is the case may be found in answers that go beyond the often superficial and empty rhetoric of public officials' alleged claim of the invincible power of organized syndicate criminal gangs.

APPLYING THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL RACISM TO THE POLITICS OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE GANG POLICY

George M. Fredrickson introduced the concept of social racism having constituted an experience for early African-Americans—unique and separate from their history in encountering ideological racism. He defined social racism as the treatment of blacks as if they were inherently inferior for reasons of race. Social racism is racist behavior that can be inferred from actual social relationships which can thrive long after ideological racism has been discredited in the educated circles of a dominant group (Fredrickson 1971). Such a concept as distinct from its ideological derivative, finds considerable credibility in both historic and current patterns of social interactions that involve people of color in their relations with whites in American society. Social racism, as distinct from ideological racism, has been successfully presented as originating in the late 17th century, well before 19th century based ideological racism (Fredrickson 1971). America was not originally racist, but became racist gradually as a result of a series of crimes against African-American humanity stemming

primarily from selfishness, greed, and the pursuit of privilege (Fredrickson 1971).

In the late 17th century, social racism is thought to have been born out of changing laws with regard to interracial marriage, the denial of the right of free blacks to own property or vote, and other restrictions meant to subordinate blacks racially to whites (Russell 1913; Twombly, Moore 1967; Wright 1921). The origins of ideological racism on the other hand—the more direct and explicit rationalized racist ideology—is viewed as a response to 19th century North American humanitarianism, and its campaign of abolition against economic systems based on the use of slaves (Fredrickson 1971).

Social racism is characteristically present, then, with any pattern of social relations where a dominant white majority will treat a subordinate black minority as if they were inferior on the basis of their race. Such patterns of racially-motivated social behavior are arguably present today in institutionalized arrangements of structured social inequity manifested in a variety of ways suggestive of social racism. The pervasiveness of minority salary and wage differences relative to those of whites when that disparity cannot be explained by some objective condition—i.e. region, age, education, or some other justified cause—illustrates social racism in this example (Currie, Skolnick 1988). Even when an historically oppressed gender group, such as working women, find within the structure of women's pay a pervasive pattern of black and Hispanic women earning less than white women, and where this disparity also cannot be explained by a set of objective conditions, therein lies the presence of social racism as a governing force regulating wages and salaries as they are paid to female workers.

There's no huge leap in scientific logic from the illustrations of structured social subordination relating to the inequities of wages and salaries based on race cited above to patterns of racially-biased public policies, when those policies have the effects of disallowing people of color equal social opportunity to participate in the privileges, rewards, spoils, advantages, equal treatments, protections, and other benefits of societal membership. Such is the case with criminal justice policy governing gangs today. The inequities highlighting the policy of criminal gang pursuit and punishment in the United States today may very well find their most credible analysis in

explanations consistent with an ideology of social racism. Such a condition will mean, for minority street gangs and other group structures that are the objects of such social racism, relegation to a position of inferior social standing relative to Mafia and other largely white, syndicate gang structures, based solely on the racial composition of members of street gangs. Such a principle would explain the pervasive racial inequities of gang policy today.

ORGANIZED "WHITE COLLAR" GANGS, AND THE POLITICS OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE GANG POLICY CORRUPTION

Large, rich, typically white, powerful "Mafia" criminal gangs have been comparatively immune to police raids, arrests, scrutiny, and other law enforcement devices in its war against criminal gangs. The central question that stands out as critical for law enforcement, the courts, and other authorities within the criminal justice system is why this pattern of differential treatment of criminal gang structures exists today? Clearly, the power and wealth of organized syndicate gangs have been critical in helping shape current criminal justice system policies away from interrupting this group's activities and financial interests (Yates 1995a). Organized crime has infiltrated legitimate industries, including construction, waste removal, the wholesale and retail distribution of goods, hotel and restaurant operations, liquor sales, motor vehicle repairs, real estate, and banking (Yates 1995a). By one report alone, organized syndicated crime's infiltration of the U.S. construction industry nets organized crime more than \$45 billion in new income each year (President's Commission on Organized Crime 1986).

The financial power of organized crime groups has allowed them to purchase a large degree of freedom from the "burdens" of aggressive law enforcement. The reach of organized crime into the policy decision-making networks of officials in law enforcement, the courts, local government, and the private sector is readily apparent when we see in the midst of a few cursory successful prosecutions of big-time racketeers and drug kingpins, organized criminal groups' continuing hold on their mega-billion dollar financial enterprises in the United States and abroad (Carlson, Chaiken 1987; Manson 1986). The primary law enforcement tools against organized crime today, the enactment of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act,

and specifically for control of illicit drugs, the Continuing Criminal Enterprise (CCE) Act, as currently enforced, place only a minor dent in the formidable armor of organized crime. Criminal and civil prosecutions under both the RICO and CCE Acts in the period since the mid-1970s have been largely confined to garden-variety commercial fraud cases and the most humdrum and routine of drug distribution networks (Dombrink, Meeker 1986). These acts have been as controversial for their erosion of certain civil protections as they have been for their failure to control organized crime. Dombrink and Meeker (1986), have shown that the recent statutes produce, a far more dramatic effect on the legal system and the relationships of key actors in the criminal justice system, perhaps, than they will affect the amount of drugs entering the country.

A number of criminologists have noted patterns of similarities and interrelationships between organized syndicate crime and white-collar crime (Simon, Eitzen 1990; Spitzer 1975; Szasz 1986; Tabor 1971). The relationship between organized syndicate crime and white-collar crime has been presented as one of mutual beneficial interdependence (Martens, Miller-Longfellow 1982; Szasz 1986). Andrew Szasz (1986), for example, has suggested that legitimate corporations that generate hazardous waste may in fact benefit quite extensively in expenditure savings from the illegal disposal of hazardous waste, generated by elements of organized crime active in industrial waste disposal. Mery Morash (1984) has offered the theory that the strongest connections between organized crime and legitimate business are found in businesses characterized by low technology, the sale of uniform products, and rigid markets where increases in price will not result in reduced demand. Critical theorists have historically pointed out the corrupt connections between organized syndicated criminal gangs and local police groups, politicians, and private businessmen (Chambliss 1976, 1978; Gardiner, Lyman 1978; Hills 1971; Potter 1994; Potter, Jenkins 1985). Local politicians have been prime benefactors of organized syndicated criminal gangs. In the 1960s, it was estimated that \$2 billion annually was given by organized crime figures to public officials each year in the form of campaign contributions (King 1969). Estimates today are that this figure in the 1990s may have tripled or quadrupled (Potter 1994).

The Presidents Commission on

groups are more problematic for the nation's largest cities than gangs. In surveys from 13 cities, including the largest in the U.S., seven times as many communities reported problems with disruptive youth groups as reported problems with gangs (Howell 1994; Miller 1982).

Field studies in the 1980s failed to confirm the presence of migratory satellite gangs in distant locations. Gangs new to localities, when they have been found, are observed to be the result largely of family migration and recruits from local neighborhoods (Hagedorn 1988; Huff 1989; Rosenbaum, Grant 1983). Gang involvement in violence and homicide is often turf-related than drug-related. In a study of Chicago's four largest and most criminally-active street gangs during 1987 to 1990, only 8 of 288 gang-motivated homicides were related to drugs. The larger gangs were extensively engaged in acts of instrumental violence—theft, burglary, or possession or sale of drugs (Block, Block 1993).

Empirical research reveals no extensive involvement of street gangs in drug trafficking as an organizational activity. Instead individual gang members engage in freelance drug sales (Esbensen, Huizinga 1993; Hagedorn 1994; Howell 1994; Klein et al 1991; Mieczkowski 1990; Moore 1978; Williams 1989).

In Los Angeles, researchers concluded that the connection between street gangs, drugs, and homicide was weak and could not account for the increase in Los Angeles homicides during the 1980s (Klein et al 1991). An analysis of Los Angeles homicides occurring between January 1, 1986, and August 31, 1988 did not support the theory that a substantial proportion of homicides are attributable to gang involvement in narcotics trafficking (Meehan, O'Carroll 1995). In Pasadena and Pomona, California, a similar study found gang members involved in only 5 percent of all violent homicides involving the sale of drugs between 1989 and 1991 (Maxson, Klein, Cunningham 1993). Indeed, local police recommended a move away from gang specialization in narcotics enforcement as a policy change for these two communities (Maxson et al 1993).

Interviews with 151 gang members from Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Diego, for the purpose of learning about their involvement in drug dealing and whether or not violence was associated with drug sales, turned up little association between these groups and violent incidents (Fagan 1989; Howell 1994).

Some investigations of street gangs have turned up gang specialization in drug trafficking (Chin 1989; Dolan, Finney 1984; Phillibosian 1989; Virgil 1988), still the prevailing view of the researchers of street gangs, drugs, and criminal violence is that the most common experiences involved individual gang members in drug distribution networks that are neither gang-controlled nor organized gang activities (Decker 1993; Goldstein, Huff 1993; Hagedorn 1991).

In casting an empirical spotlight on the policy-generating myths of drug distribution and its connection to criminal homicide and other violence in Asian communities, Joe (1994) concluded that the connections between Asian gangs and organized crime operations are not at all clear and are best conceptualized as associations between individuals in groups and not as criminal conspiracies.

In spite of this range of evidence calling into question the recent campaign of raising street gangs to the level of this country's most menacing pariah, we see a pattern of quiet acquiescence to the privileges and power of syndicated criminal gangs displayed by established law enforcement, the courts, and private businesses, as these groups tolerate and even participate in the offenses of syndicated criminal gang structures.

THE RACISM OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE GANG POLICY

Racism and class prejudice define gang policy in this country when, in the absence of an objective basis for the dichotomy that governs pursuit of gang groups today, we have the practices of a severely prejudicial gang policy. Given organized syndicated crime's superior success in influencing the mental, social, physical, and emotional health of the general public, this gang structure's injury to the overall well-being of this country's children, young adults, and elderly greatly exceeds injury inflicted on the public by street gangs. Because street gangs consist mostly of the poor and of people of color, the policy of criminal justice authorities treating street gangs structures more harshly than syndicated gangs, clearly invites an analysis of racial status, and to a lesser degree, class status as guiding principles in setting contemporary gang policy.

The American Criminal Justice System's war on drugs is not a neutral war, for example. The poor and racial minorities have unsuspectingly been its most active targets. While,

Organized Crime (1986) reports that organized syndicated criminal gangs closely match the popular images of mob, underworld, Mafia, wiseguys, or La Cosa Nostra in their empirical essence. Organized syndicated criminal gangs have, further, been characterized by law enforcement as the elite element of organized crime in America. They, more than any of the other gang structures in America, are responsible for the estimated \$90 billion gross earnings of the illegal activities of organized crime's enterprises. They, more than any of the other gang groups, monopolize the infiltrating of legitimate as well as illegitimate businesses. They, more than any of the other gang groups, monopolize the unlawful services of gambling, prostitution, drugs, loan sharking, racketeering, laundering money, land fraud, and computer crime (President's Commission on Organized Crime 1986).

The law-enforcement perspective on organized crime provides the clearest distinction between the huge financial reserve of large, syndicated, affluent, criminals gangs and the street gangs of largely inner-city socially-depressed urban America. While syndicated criminal gangs enjoy a high degree of affluence, the indulgences of street gangs more closely parallel the activities of popularly acknowledged street crime—including gang-related assaults, robbery, burglary, larceny, drug use, gambling, and other offenses and self-indulgences of more immediate consequence and pattern to its victims and perpetrators (Hagedorn 1994; Howell 1994; Joe 1994; Kelly, Chin, Fagan 1993). Street gangs are also disproportionately made up of the socially displaced young among African-American, Latino, Jamaican, Chinese, Japanese, and increasingly today, Vietnamese populations (Kenney, Finckenauer 1995).

While the wealth and power of organized syndicate gangs may provide an explanation for the relative freedom with which syndicated gangs operate across the United States today, criminal individuals or street gangs have been powerless to avoid arrests and convictions against those who violate this country's laws (Browning, Garassi 1980; Hoffman 1987; Ness 1987; Petersilia 1983). The critical question remains, why the differential treatment in policies governing criminal gangs within the criminal justice system?

STREET GANGS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY

U.S. criminal justice policy today remains quite uneven in the pressures it exerts on gang units in this country (Yates 1995a). Street "gangs," mostly of young African Americans, Latinos, and other young people of color, are the targets of the most intense and persistent law-enforcement efforts (Yates 1995a). By contrast, rich, powerful "Mafia" and other organized criminal syndicated "gangs," have largely escaped any comparably sized police scrutiny and pursuit (Simon, Eitzen 1990). Well-known to the general public are the media-covered police "gang" sweeps in racial and ethnic minority neighborhoods (Hagedorn 1991), while it is very rare for similar raids to be perpetrated against powerful syndicate-style gang and group structures. While tough court punishment and imprisonment of members of racial and ethnic minority gangs have indicated the policies of big city police districts and departments, only very recently have a modicum of punitive measures to halt the pillage of large-scale organized criminal gang structures been instituted (Dombrink, Meeker 1986; Kenney, Finckenauer 1995).

Organized syndicate gangs have in the past engaged in an almost unlimited advertising and selling of their products and wares to a generally receptive public. What makes syndicate gang structures different from street gang units is their level of commitment to the goals of advancing and participating in an illegal economy of improperly obtained, procured, and sponsored consumables. Organized syndicate-style criminal gangs, further, are more thoroughly locked into collusive relationships with legitimate businesses, and outside specialists—including pilots, chemists, arsonists, corrupt police and politicians, as well as corrupt officials in private business than is the case, generally speaking, for minority street gangs (Block 1982; Dombrink, Meeker 1986; Report to the Nation on Crime and Justice 1988; Thomas 1977).

Considerable evidence points to most serious urban crime being at the instigation of non-gang youth and/or law-violating youth groups acting outside the organized activities of a gang (Howell 1994; Miller 1982, 1994). Except in a few of the largest U.S. cities experiencing the most severe gang problems, problems with nongang youth groups were generally considered to be more serious than problems with gangs. Unaffiliated disruptive youth

proportionately, African-Americans made up 12 percent of the regular drug user population in the late 1980s, and 16 percent of the regular cocaine-using population for the same period, 48 percent of those arrested for heroin or cocaine drug charges in 1988 were African-American (Meddis 1989).

The behavior of the nation's juvenile courts in adjudicating juvenile cases brought before it also provides evidence of racial bias in the decisions it makes in meting out justice. The nation's juvenile courts in the 1980s were more likely to suspend drug offense cases involving white youth charged with illegal possession than minority children charged with the same offense (*Juveniles Taken into Custody Annual Report* 1990). Between 1984 and 1988, youthful drug offenses involving white youth retained for court review declined by 2 percent, while over the same period these same cases increased more than 260 percent for minority youth (*Juveniles Taken into Custody Annual Report* 1990).

Sentencing decisions in the American criminal justice system indicative of social racism show that race and class conditions influence the treatment received from the nation's courts and jurists in criminal case processing, criminal sentencing, decisions to incarcerate, plea bargaining outcomes, and capital case sentencing (Bell 1973; Gerard, Terry 1970; Howard 1975; Kleck 1981; *Mandatory Minimum Penalties* 1991; Petersilia 1983; Silverstein 1965; Thornberry 1973; Wolfgang, Riedel 1973).

Racist practices in plea bargaining, as a component of the "get tough" policies on minority drug offenders, appear to increasingly pervade the implementation of federal mandatory sentencing statutes in drug-related and other federal crimes. In a special report by the U.S. Sentencing Commission to the U.S. Congress, federal prosecutors regularly applied plea bargaining in sentencing decisions in a way that appears related to the race of the defendant (*Mandatory Minimum Penalties* 1991). In examining the behavior of federal prosecutors for a period between October 1, 1989 through September 30, 1990, the Commission reported that a greater proportion of black defendants was sentenced at or above the indicated mandatory minimum (68%), followed by Hispanics (57%) and Whites (54%) (*Mandatory Minimum Penalties* 1991).

The Commission reports that plea bargaining practices of federal prosecutors favor

white defendants in narcotics cases over black and Hispanics, most actively at minimum sentences of 120 months. Even after conviction in cases that carry a 120 month federal mandatory minimum sentence, white defendants (54%) were considerably less likely than either black (at 65%) or Hispanic (at 65%) defendants to be handed this mandatory minimum sentence (*Mandatory Minimum Penalties* 1991). Examining racial disparities in federal drug sentencing over time, the Commission pointed out that the differences found across races appears to have increased since 1986. The racial disparities are observed by the Commission to have first developed between 1986 and 1988, after implementation of mandatory minimum drug provisions, and it remained constant ever since (*Mandatory Minimum Penalties* 1991).

CORRECTING GANG POLICY TODAY: REMOVING THE VESTIGES OF A RACIAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE GANG PURSUIT

On the other hand, marginal economic status, poverty, unemployment and underemployment, social and economic dislocation and all the clustering of social problems associated with the "underclass" of public housing abandoned, inner-city urban neighborhoods create a common dynamic in the social experiences of members of minority street gangs (Huff 1989). Deindustrialization in the 1970s and 1980s added mightily to the stress placed on traditional institutional structures of social control in our urban neighborhoods: families, good jobs, schools, churches, and other historically-anchored agencies to guide the behavior of the community's young (Hagdom 1991; Jackson 1991; Ropers 1988). During the 1970s at least 38 million jobs in the industry were permanently lost (Ropers 1988). Deindustrialization would affect minorities more than whites. A study by the U.S. Department of Labor (1985) found that, between 1979 and 1983, a total of 11.5 million workers lost jobs because of plant closing or employment cutbacks. The study focused on the 5.1 million workers out of the 11.5 million displaced workers who had worked at least three years in their jobs. Among this sample of 5.1 million displaced workers, the Labor Department found that about 600,000 were black and less than half of them (42%) were reemployed when interviewed (Ropers 1988). Hispanic workers accounted for about 280,000 of the displaced. The proportion of them reemployed (52%) was

higher than blacks but considerably lower than for whites (Ropers 1988). Of whites who had been displaced, over three-fifths were re-employed and less than a quarter were unemployed (Ropers 1988).

Black and Hispanic teenagers in urban centers in the Midwest have not been immune from the economic consequences of lost industrial jobs. In Milwaukee between 1979 and 1986 over 50,000 jobs, or some 23 percent of Milwaukee's manufacturing employment, were lost to deindustrialization (Hagedorn 1991; White, Zipp, Reynolds, Paetsch 1988). African-American workers suffered the worst job losses in Milwaukee. While 40 percent of African-American workers were concentrated in manufacturing in 1980, by 1989 research in five all-black Milwaukee census tracts found that only about one-fourth of all black workers were still employed in manufacturing (Moore, Edari 1990). This social experience of economic unrest has continued with Milwaukee's African-American community experiencing official unemployment rates of close to 30 percent in recent years (Hagedorn 1991).

Not all the central cities' woes of recent times can be attributed to deindustrialization. Public policies during the 1980s were particularly belligerent in ignoring the financial and social needs of the cities. Because of industry deregulation and tax policies favoring the rich, now cash-heavy industry would be inspired to leave the central cities during the decade. Tragically, no meaningful public policy for the central cities would be erected by either Ronald Reagan or George Bush to make up for capital flight from urban areas during the period. The economic base of the cities, which once included the opportunity for secure work and meaningful jobs, would fall victim during the 1980s to an urban policy heavily favoring high-income, suburban corporations (Yates 1995b).

In the face of such recent economic demoralization and public policy vacuum for urban neighborhoods, street gangs in the nation's largest cities have reemerged as a direct response to what may well be regarded as a renewed pattern of social oppression against this country's racial minorities and poor. The solutions to the problems of street gangs are not likely to be found in policies that ignore conditions of social despair, hopelessness, blocked opportunities, urban blight, and ignored urban neighborhoods and their residents. The social racism of street gang policy

today is to be found in local, state, and federal government, and private business toleration of inner-city social institutional structures that are made to remain less effective, in the face of a bounty of public dollars, that over the course of the 1980s, would be redistributed from the neighborhoods of the working poor, and the poor, to the rich (Yates 1995b).

Public policy needs to address the social disorganization of urban neighborhoods found in less-than-effective family lives, schools, churches, neighborhood groups, community centers, and other structures that normally provide a sense of neighborhood social integration. Public policy needs to construct opportunities for community cohesion, solidarity, concern, care, and neighborhood order found in successful businesses, good jobs, meaningful industry, inclusive services, and training centers offering opportunities for the community's members to contribute to the productivity of American society and life. The empowerment of urban residents themselves becomes, then, the key to erecting a successful urban policy to accomplish the goals of removing street gangs and building social organization for the central cities of this country.

This direction to an effective urban policy has already been urged by leading theorists who see the need to divert public dollars from what has been well-intentioned, but failed, programs run by middle-class white providers, connected to a self-preserving welfare establishment (Hagedorn 1991). Rather, as many of these scholars have offered, public dollars earmarked for urban neighborhoods should be spent mainly on programs physically located in underclass neighborhoods, run by people with ties to the neighborhoods they intend to serve (Hagedorn 1991; Lipsky 1980; Pfohl 1994). Still others have identified the importance of large public bureaucracies becoming more neighborhood-based and more open to input from clients and the neighborhoods they serve as part of any successful remedy for the social disorganization of inner-city urban neighborhoods today (Chubb, Moe 1990; Figueira-McDonough 1991; Hagedorn 1991; Kammerman, Kahn 1989; Lipsky 1980).

Eliminating the social racism of street gang policy requires an acknowledgment of the connections between the recent history of a racially-biased public policy, as evidenced by this country's ignoring of the nation's urban neighborhoods, and the bold reemergence of urban centered street gangs. The to-date

unwillingness of public officials and policy makers to allow any alternative to the ever-expanding harsh rhetoric and dehumanizing experiences of longer and more violent prison stays as a main response to the disorder of members of street gangs, illustrates as much as any behavior has, the racist color of today's criminal justice gang policies.

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