



CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON
ORGANIZED CRIME AND GANG VIOLENCE
SENATOR WADIE P. DEDDEH, CHAIRMAN

Hearing on

**PEER COUNSELING: A PROPOSAL
TO COUNTER STREET GANG
AND DRUG INFLUENCE**



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March 27, 1989
Sacramento, California

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AND GANG VIOLENCE

**HEARING: Peer Counseling: A proposal to
counter street gang and drug influence**

March 27, 1989
2:30 p.m.
Sacramento, California

CHAIRMAN: HONORABLE WADIE P. DEDDEH

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CHAIRMAN WADIE DEDDEH: In opening this hearing, I should make two points. One is the fact that this hearing is a follow-up to the interim hearing of last fall. The second point is, which is the most important one, by holding this hearing, we are proving that we mean business, that we do not take the opinions and concerns of our constituents lightly.

I have seen the impressive testimony in the report of our Oakland hearing. This testimony was provided by organizations such as the Oakland Youth Corps and the Omega Boys Club. My attention was especially drawn to the Peer Counseling Program of the Omega Boys Club. Consequently, I encouraged my staff to draft legislation which I have introduced in an attempt to enact a peer counseling program. It is my opinion, and I believe the Committee's opinion, that programs such as this are needed to help eliminate the destructive influence of gangs and drugs.

The proposed measure is not cast in stone, so to speak. There is still room for further development and refinement. Accordingly, we solicit your suggestions and ideas in an effort to flesh out and refine this measure.

I want to recognize a member of this committee, Senator Diane Watson and, of course, Aubrey, the Committee consultant. And at this time, I'm going to ask our first witness, a representative from the Omega Boys Club of San Francisco, to step forward and make your presentation. Could you please speak in the mike and identify yourself by stating your name.

MR. JOE MARSHALL: I'm Joe Marshall, one of the co-founders and co-directors of the Omega Boys Club in San Francisco. To my right is Preston Worthy who is now the director of the Club as well as the other co-founder and co-director of the Club who is Jack Jacqua.

First of all, I want to say Senator Deddeh, I'm pleased to meet you. I wasn't able to be at the hearing, though.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: I was not there either so we're even. (Laughter)

MR. MARSHALL: And I was not there before but I really would like to thank you for inviting us to be here.

The Omega Boys Club, very briefly -- it won't be very long because I want the Boys Club members to speak -- it was founded in March of 1987 and it was founded by advocates of the criminal justice system. Jack is a high school counselor in San Francisco. And we, very briefly, just got tired of seeing too many young people not make it. The Boys Club is essentially an organization that asks two things, that you get good grades in school and that you do not take drugs. And if you do those things, we will do a number of things. But our principal thing that we do is to help young men and women get to college if they stay in the Club when they become seniors.

The Club has been, and I guess we feel from the reports, we have been very successful. We have about 85 young people in the club. We had eight seniors last year, eight young men who were seniors -- seven -- one woman -- who were seniors in the club last year and they're now college

freshmen at Morris Brown and Delaware State and Texas Southern. We have 24 boys going this year. It's a volunteer effort. The bottom line is, it is working, and why. We've got a number of reasons. And we brought some of the young men with us who obviously can tell you better about this than we can.

The programs that we have -- two of the main ones -- the main ones are: We run a study hall every Tuesday in different areas of the city, principally in our home, which is Potrero Hill Neighborhood house, where the young men get tutoring every Tuesday, all subjects. We offer them counseling; we have S.A.T. preparation; we have counseled all of them.

And again, probably the program that we're also very involved which you know about is the Peer Counseling Program and we go into the juvenile facilities in San Francisco, principally in the Youth Guidance Center and Log Cabin Ranch. One of the young men you see here today, you will meet, we did meet in the Youth Guidance Center. And he's come out, he's doing very well, and now he goes back and does peer counseling himself.

So I'll stop right here. I think what I'll do is to give it to Jack and Preston. You want to show the video? It's very short. We'd really like you to see it because it'll give you a good idea of what we're about. It'll be about ten minutes and we'll come back.

Okay. Why don't you come sit at the table real quick. First, you're going to see a segment on the college tours. And then you're going to see a segment on peer counseling that we've done at the lockups. You'll see an idea of how they work.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Turn that TV, please, so that Senator Watson can see it.

***** VCR PRESENTATION *****

MR. MARSHALL: A couple points that I want to make sure you saw. That young man you saw there who bedazzled the ladies, that's Joe Thomas and Joe Thomas had been in Youth Guidance 15 times before he got here. He was a big drug dealer in San Francisco and he's completely turned himself around. He's now a freshman at Morris Brown and we're proud of him.

The peer counseling thing basically started -- like we say, we just felt that -- I remember one time we wanted to see some young men who were living in lockup from our community. We wanted to go up there and see them. We went up there one day and we didn't see them. We were denied and we actually then went and talked to the director of Youth Guidance Center and he said he thought this would be a good idea. If young men with similar experiences were let in there to do counseling -- and we've been doing it about, what, about a year now? And I guess since this last September. And ...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Let me ask you about the film. There were youngsters in there whose faces we couldn't see. The commentator said it was because they are -- were they incarcerated?

MR. MARSHALL: Because they're juveniles.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Juveniles?

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Then when they come to the Club, are they supervised or do they come by special permission? How do they come?

MR. JACK JACQUA: Well, actually both because I think we were maybe even the first group. We took a young man who was incarcerated in the Youth Guidance Center and flew him to Washington, D.C., with 11 other members of our organization for the March in Washington commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King's March. So we actually got the judge's permission to take him for three or four days out of the facility. We've had other young men come to our meetings or programs at our center, from the lockup. Mr. Berkowitz who's here from Log Cabin Ranch got permission from the judge for Mr. Berkowitz to take two young men for one week to Los Angeles for a National Conference on Black Youth ...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: And the club these young men were attending, and women, how is it paid for? By volunteers, contributions?

MR. JACQUA: It's strictly a volunteer effort. I mean the money that has come in for the trips, for the food, for study hall, to help pay for the colleges.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Where does this come from?

MR. JACQUA: ... It is donated.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Donate.

MR. JACQUA: Donations. It is all volunteer donations and it all goes into the hands of the young people. In other words, there are no adults whatsoever, including ourselves who can take the money out of the effort.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Let me throw a percentage at you. Let's say you have a hundred of these young men who come in and out for about six months, one year, whatever -- how many of them will make it and how many of them will drop out and go back?

MR. JACQUA: Well, as far as we're concerned, our percentage of going back is virtually nil. I mean, of course, the commitment is there with us. The other half has got to be with them. But the point is that at this point those that have decided to turn their lives around and use us as an extended family, we have had no one turn back like that.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Do they realize, do they not, that if they do not make it with you and go back, that that's the end of their future life and everything?

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, I think they think about it ...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: They recognize that ...

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, I think that's what happens. And what you just saw is not the only thing that happens. See, we go over there every Wednesday, every Wednesday.

SENATOR DIANE WATSON: Where's this you go?

MR. MARSHALL: Youth Guidance Center.

SENATOR WATSON: I see.

MR. JACQUA: San Francisco has a beautiful lockup facility.

SENATOR WATSON: Okay. I would ask a question, if I may.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Sure. Senator Watson.

SENATOR WATSON: Does it take place at the Youth Guidance Center?

MR. MARSHALL: Uh-huh.

SENATOR WATSON: I see. If you didn't do it there, would you do it out in the community on neutral territory? How does that work?

MR. MARSHALL: We could -- what we're doing right now, as a matter of fact, we're going into the facility, these young men enter the facility. Now suppose a young man shows interest, I mean, you know, he seems to want to turn his life around. These two young men seated here today work up there quite often. And what Jack and Preston will do, is that they will follow-up individually with the young men. I mean they will go visit them on Tuesday, Wednesday, on days that we don't come up there normally, to keep this spark in them alive to visit them privately. Again, a lot of times, we'll contact the homes. We'll listen to parents and see if they want us to help.

Some young men, when they're actually released, will be placed into a halfway house setting. We have several young men who are still in lockup but if they're not in those situations they can be placed in a transition house in San Francisco. We deal with them, working their way, working them back into the fabric of society. Some young men go into group homes, then we'll continue to work with them.

SENATOR WATSON: If these young men here are the peer counselors, is there a problem when you instruct counseling that they might recognize someone who's in a rival gang? And so does that enter into the picture?

MR. MARSHALL: It happens all the time.

SENATOR WATSON: Well, what do you mean "all the time"?

MR. MARSHALL: The beauty of the Club is that we don't have that problem. The emphasis is that we don't have a gang problem. We don't have a turf problem. In this club are members of -- from all areas of the city.

SENATOR WATSON: When they go to counsel, you know, the peer counselors, does that enter in as a problem?

MR. MARSHALL: We address the gang and turf issue right in the Youth Guidance Center. And the issue comes up, not so much -- well, suppose, for example, in San Francisco, they're not gangs but we have rival areas. A young man from one area who was in jail sees somebody from our group who is in another area. We address the whole issue of that and we show they were all -- there is no difference. This particular group does not do that.

We have had many people -- and I'll give you a real good example -- we have young men who were at each others' throats in an institution because they were from rival areas who are now, because of our intervention -- I believe it was our intervention -- that that no longer exists. Go ahead.

MR. JACQUA: All right. The key thing is the ability for all of us to educate or reinforce each individual, for instance, to the fact that they are somebody, that there is work there. We are an extended family. We are a group. I mean all you -- you know, it's like we need each other to lean on. These are some of the things -- but, you see, it works. And when we read in the papers and see what

went on in San Francisco last week, it seems like the police -- it seems like a lot of legislators -- it seems like a lot of politicians -- don't get to the roots of the problem. Why is this occurring; why is this happening? Not because of drugs. It's because of a lack of a family environment that is wholesome and healthy. It is because there are no available jobs or training programs. It's because the large inner city public school systems have definitely turned their back on the needs of the young people. And it's true in L.A. It's the same thing in San Francisco, Sacramento, or Chicago, or wherever you want to go. And unfortunately, people don't want to look at that because it's scary. That means that there has to be changes in, you know, one's own, a commitment to what's going on.

And so we're where it's at, just like getting -- I mean every young man's not necessarily going to college but we have to start like a sense of a family structure, a sense of belonging, a sense of you're part of something that's wholesome -- it's healthy -- and that's what we're building.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, you know, I was going to say the hardest thing we have -- to be very honest, the most difficult thing we face is getting people to believe that this works, that it can happen, that it does happen. I mean that's the biggest obstacles that we face with the young men at the beginning when we go in, for others to believe that it does work and it can work.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: A lot of people have lost faith in the system. And so these young men come here, you're counselors or ...

MR. MARSHALL: Let me introduce them to you.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Yeah, I'd like to meet them. I'd like to have them come forward, if I may. I want to hear it from them. Come on, sir. You can sit here.

MR. MARSHALL: They can tell you as much about their past as they want to. Andre Aikins at the very end, Jermaine King, LaMerle Johnson, and Leland Johnson, and all of them, I think, are good examples of what Omega is doing.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Sure. Who would like to start first? The bigger boy there. Go ahead. Grab the mike closer to you and speak into the mike because this is recorded, sir.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: My name is Leland Johnson. Ever since '83, I was involved in a lot of drug activity.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: How old are you, Leland?

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: I'm 23.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: 23. Okay.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: I was involved in a lot of drug activity. I felt that I had a lot of people talking to me and stuff. I just really didn't want to listen to them until one day I got shot in the head and the abdomen. When I got out of the hospital, I knew that I wanted to change. I knew there was something I wanted to do. There was nobody I could turn to. I was still having problems at home and I didn't know how to deal with it. So I felt there was somebody I needed to talk to. But one day I picked up the paper -- well, my girlfriend picked up the paper and she told me of an article about the boy on the end there, Andre Aikins, and how he turned his life around and how the Boys Club helped him.

So I took it upon myself one late night. I called up Jack and Andre and I talked to 'em and they

gave me that extended hand that I needed. They gave me that, like you said, an extended family. I felt like that was my second family. They grabbed me right away from the drug life. They got me to where I'm healthy feeling now and I'll never, ever, sell a drug never again in my life.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: What do you do now?

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: Well, I just ..

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Do you have a job?

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: Yeah. Mr. Marshall helped me get it. Well, he encouraged me to go out there looking in several places and I got a job today at the Hyatt Hotel.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Good.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: That helped me a whole lot.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Do you engage in counseling yourself to try to rescue some other fellows or young men from a life that otherwise would be destroyed?

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: Yes, I've devoted my life to that. Before, I would die for the drugs and money. I've told myself if I am going to die for anything else from here on out, I'm going to die for a good cause.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Well, let's hear all of your stories and then if Senator Watson would like to ask a question, or me, then we'll ask you a few. You want to identify yourself, sir?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: I'm LaMerle Johnson and I grew up in the Richmond area and I'm originally from San Francisco. I'm the young man they were talking about when they said they had a young man from the Youth Guidance Center for you to see. I basically grew up in a structured home, but when I hit 14, it fell apart. And then I went into the drug areas and I started selling drugs and doing things of that nature. I've been to jail about 18 times and ...

SENATOR WATSON: How old are you?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: 17.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: 17 now?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: 17 now. See, last time -- I basically knew I had to change. But, see, I would sit in jail and think about changing. Well, they offered me incentives for running. The last time I went, I met the Omega Boys Club and they gave me the initiative to start to change. See, if you have the certain type of friends, that's who you stay with.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Mr. Johnson, what kind of crime did you commit that caused you to go to jail 17 times?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: Stealing, possession of firearms.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: I see. Are you in counseling now?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: Yes, I am.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Do you have a job?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: No, I don't.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Do you go to school?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: Yes, I do.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: What grade?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: Senior.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Continuation school or a regular school?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: Continuation school.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Very good. Very good. Name, sir.

MR. JERMAINE KING: My name is Jermaine King. I'm 17 years of age. And ever since I was 13, from 13 to age 16, I was on and off drugs and dealing, you might say a so-called gang banger, which is either being in a gang but it wasn't really a gang, just me and a group of my friends would get together. And if we ever had a problem, say if I got jumped or if LaMerle got jumped and he came back to us and said, "I need some help," we'd go help him out. And so this happened up until, when I was about 16, then I got kicked out of school with possession of a firearm. And right up to then ..

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: How did you acquire that firearm? Where did you get it?

MR. KING: Off the street, from one of my friends. And so right after I got kicked out of school, that's when I was introduced into the Boys Club that a friend of mine was in. And me and a few of my friends went down there and I liked it. And I said the main reason why I liked it is because it was sort of an extended family. Well, it is an extended family. And it's like a lot of areas where my mother and I couldn't cope because I was living with my mother, a single parent. In a lot of areas, we couldn't talk about my feelings because she wouldn't understand. Mr. Marshall, Preston, and Jack did understand. So I spent a lot of time with them and they just helped me bring my life around because I knew what I was doing was wrong. But it was the peer pressure out on the streets that my friends have for me and I have with my friends. They just wouldn't allow me to get out. And now, I can gladly say that I am out and I'm doing well in school and I'm getting ready to go to college in September.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Senator Watson.

SENATOR WATSON: I was just going to say, what do you want to be?

MR. KING: I want to be a psychologist.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: That's a good field. Do you have an idea of how many people you can help by being out of jail?

MR. KING: I've helped a lot already.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: What possessed you, all three of you, that we've heard from so far, to do drugs? Was it peer pressure? Was it kind of a macho syndrome? What was it?

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: I needed the money. I was in a constant fight with my parents. I didn't really want to do it. I just didn't want to study.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Once you became hooked, then you had to raise money?

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: Yeah, I had to keep going. I figured it out, yeah, that was life.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Would you two say the same thing?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: It was basically the same thing. I was basically going along. I never used drugs but they've been available since I was little.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Leland, let me ask you also. You said you come from a family where

you have a single mother. Does she work?

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: Yes, she does.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: How about you?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: Yeah, living with a single parent.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Single parent? So you feel then, when you started with the group, that that was like a family, like you belonged to somebody who'd give you a helping hand, respected you, gave you all the strength and so on and so forth. Is that what you have?

MR. KING: Mainly that's it because, you know, it's like when you go out on the streets, there are not a lot of people you can turn to. There are lots of people who call themselves your friend but they're really not.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Were you, son, aware also at the same time that this beautiful age of 17 -- I don't know about Senator Watson -- but I'd give my right hand to get back at the age of 17 -- that, either intentional or unintentional, bullets or knives or something that cuts you down and that's the end of you? Or if you commit a real serious, real serious crime, and you wind up behind bars and that's also the end of you? Do you realize that? And obviously, my next question is: Did you realize the consequences of it?

MR. KING: Yes. But, see ...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: But then why did you do it?

MR. KING: Because sometimes, you see -- the thing about it is that a lot of times when we watch the news and we hear how people with teenagers go out and do things, let's say, kill each other, we just say, "Man, what are they there for? They're just a bunch of wild animals," whatever. But what you have to do is deal with their personal problem. And a lot of people, such as myself, at a certain point in time, I felt as though I had nothing else to do.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Let me explain to you now Assemblymember Dave Elder just joined us, in case you don't know ...(tape turned over)... committee of both houses to look into this problem and try to find some solution. We want you to help us. Yes, sir.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: What you have to understand is basically that the black family element is tearing apart -- the basic fault is we have crack, which is taking a lot of women away, which is basically the dominant role in black households. That means that the kids, they have no role models. So what you see. I mean when you go outside into the projects or in an area that is not so good -- you see dope dealers or you see pushers, you see pimps -- so I mean that's who they idolize. You don't idolize politicians, senators, or nobody like that. You idolize them and that's what you want to become. And if the attitude is, well, I don't care, that's how you grow up.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: You know, I listen to you guys and you're so sharp. You're so smart; you're so articulate. And I cannot, for the life of me, for a moment, understand why would these handsome, articulate, smart young men destroy their lives. I mean, clearly, to show you how ignorant I am, I plan to learn. Yes, sir.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: I can answer that for you. Like I said earlier, it just depends on the individual problems that the person has. Mainly what it is is that Mr. Marshall, Mr. Preston, Mr.

Jacqua has brought that out in all of us because before I got shot, I never did realize how it was. I didn't know anything else.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Excuse me, for interrupting here, Mr. Johnson. Are you going to school right now?

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: Yes, I am.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: You're a senior?

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: Yes, I am.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: I asked that before. Do you want to go to college? You have a job?

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: Not right now.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Not right now. How do you think we can do -- what can we do to help you?

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: Basically, I'm getting help right now. There are other people out there who need group counseling or drug education or tutoring.

SENATOR WATSON: Go ahead, please.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: We can sit and talk all we want to but we don't see the problem. The problem is out there on the streets and that's where it's staying. It's cold out there.

SENATOR WATSON: Okay. I just wanted to introduce the presence of Senator Dan McCorquodale and then we're going to call on the young man on the end who hasn't spoke yet and then we want to call on Assemblyman Elder now.

ASSEMBLYMAN DAVE ELDER: I don't want to interrupt. Go ahead.

SENATOR WATSON: Okay. Let's hear from Andre.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: He's been waiting longer than I have.

MR. ANDRE AIKINS: My name is Andre Aikins. I'm 18. And basically my story is similar to theirs, but it's got a strange twist 'cause I had two parents that were both working and supplied the basic, the basic needs, for a young man to grow up around. But one thing that I really lacked was a positive role model, even though I had a father who worked and whatnot. But when I'd go outside, I'd like to see somebody your own age, just see somebody other than constantly the same people achieving and striving at certain things. And when I went outside, I didn't see that. All I saw were people hanging out on the corners, girls getting pregnant, pimps, whatever else, you know. And so bad things used to happen to me as well when I was coming up because I'm the smallest guy around town, you know. And basically, I always used to get picked on so I had to make a choice and that choice was to be tough and you just get taken out of the gang like that. So I made a decision to go ahead and get together with a bunch of other friends that felt basically the same way. But they didn't have two parents at home. They had single parents. But I fitted into that because I also felt like I had something missing inside, even though I had two parents, a brother, and a sister, which you would call a nuclear family. Even though I had that nuclear family, I still needed something extended, somebody else that I could talk to when the family wasn't going right at that time. So I found that with my friends out there. And later on, they didn't always start from drug dealing. It ran into drug dealing later on, but we started from little things like first hanging together. Then we

started beating people up and we just started doing a little bit of this and a little bit of that. Then it led into drugs.

So it's not like, when you say a "gang" that's constantly selling dope, that ain't all it is. A gang can just be a bunch of brothers hanging together but doing the wrong things, not necessarily dealing with the dope because, see, all it is is just another extended family, a nucleus. It's just a negative role model type of nucleus and I was hooked up with that. Like the gentleman said, I had changed my life around basically because the Omega Boys Club -- I'm from East Oakland and they were based in San Francisco and they came up, but I call it an act of faith, that they came out, they, out from San Francisco, Castlemont High School when I was attending summer school there. And basically, I was just about ready to give up on school anyway because I got put back a year. I had moved from school to school to school to school so many times. So the way it was, was he came up there, and basically, they let the young men talk and that's what caught my eye. There it is, the role model, the exact role model that everybody wants to look up to when they go outside, the role model that -- besides that, maybe dad is the greatest man in the world in your child's eye or maybe you don't want to be exactly like that. Maybe he want to be something else. But what can you choose when constantly you see the wrong type of role model be the wrong type of person?

So when I saw what these brothers were doing and how they feel, I said to myself, man, there are people -- you know, there's actually young men my own age that want to do something with their lives, you know, that's actually thinking about the worldly perspective of things and not the things on my block, my corner, my little neighborhood. And we'll just think about that. But then we think about the world in scope and brotherhood. That's the key issue. Gangs exist for brotherhood. But if you pay attention, gangs are rivaling against one another for various reasons. But in the club, like Mr. Marshall said, we've got people from one part, people from another part, people of this color group or that color group, and it all falls together because we look at each other, not as just people but brothers and sisters. And when I saw that, I said I really would like to get involved in that, you know. It gave me something to look up to, something to be positive. It's given me an identity.

So I went ahead and I went to the meeting that night. See, it made everything happen for me because on that day it was the day for it to happen for me later that night. So I went to a meeting and then I got to see the brothers, and not just up on stage but on a personal basis. And they -- it's just like what you said. It's kind of hard to describe because you only feel it in your heart, you know. If you feel a comfort, when you feel like, hey, I'm doing something good -- I'm around positive people, you know, I really am somebody and I'm around a lot of people that want to be somebody that are constantly keeping me on my toes ...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: How old are you, son? I'm sorry for interrupting. How old are you?

MR. AIKINS: 18.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Do you go to school?

MR. AIKINS: Not right now.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Not right now. Have you finished high school?

MR. AIKINS: No, I hadn't. I'm taking the G.E.D.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Okay. Do you have a job?

MR. AIKINS: Yes. Recently, I picked up two.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Two jobs?

MR. AIKINS: Yeah.

ASSEMBLYMAN DAVE ELDER: Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Okay. Mr. Elder.

ASSEMBLYMAN DAVE ELDER: I'm going to have to leave because I have a meeting --

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: -- in my office in progress that I'm supposed to be attending. And I just wanted to throw out for you gentlemen's reaction -- one of the things that's been suggested to me to help with the gang problem is some type of public service work that our young people would be involved in at age 16, 17, or 18 for a two- or three-year period.

Before the Vietnam War, we used to have a thing called the draft. And when people were in school, they were deferred until they graduated so that people would decide whether they wanted to be deferred or go into the Armed Services. Well, obviously we don't necessarily want to have the Armed Services as the only public service work that people can do, but we have the California Conservation Corps; we have, obviously, the military with various branches and there would be others that perhaps we can develop. And in the case of the Conservation Corps, there is a salary paid; there is a salary paid in the military. And I presume that in these other public service jobs, there would be as well. And I just want to get your reaction to some type of mandatory public service for work in our society, whether it's the military, the Conservation Corps, or some other service that, unless you were in school and proceeding toward a degree, would be deferred until you graduated and then you could do it at a higher level.

So why don't we -- you're 18 and you're --

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: 17 and he's 23.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: 23? Okay. So could I just have your reaction? I don't care, the one who wants to -- you seem to want to say the most about this so, because I think it really holds out some hope for us.

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: Basically, what I feel about that is that the military has always been ..

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: Always what?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: The military is big. That's because everybody knows that the military is there. They know that the Conservation Corps is there. But ...

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: But you're not mandated to go into one or the other.

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: That is true.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: If you were, it would be more than there; it would be on your case.

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: I think that will have a lot of -- the other guys, they will make a lot of young people rebel against ...

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: They sure did against the draft.

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: That's the same problem we would have now.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: So you don't think the basic difference between the military or other public service work, they'd still rebel against it?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: Basically what we need is just jobs, they want jobs, just like, you know, I was involved in, and LaMerle was, and he was and he was. We were all making more money than anybody could make on any job.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: In terms of the drugs?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: Yeah, in terms of the drug money, but all I wanted was a job.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: It's pretty risky work, though, wasn't it?

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: Yeah, it proved to be pretty risky work in my case but all I wanted was a job; all I wanted was to work. And even though, even after I decided to change, went out there and I wanted a job, me and Mr. Marshall, we looked all over the place.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: Well, these public service commissions that I'm talking about would pay.

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: They will pay but, you know, would they pay enough? You know, they gotta make the old job ...

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: Well, you have a high-paying job that you kind of gave up.

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: Yeah, but that's not what you want to do. You suddenly realize that that's not what you want to do. You do it for certain reasons.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: How much is enough? How much money would you have to make in order to ...

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: At the job, well, I just received today, I'll be making \$6. I'm happy with that.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: \$6 an hour. So that's \$240 a week. That's basically a thousand dollars a month. That's what it would take for you to have some kind of ...

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: It's not only that. The Omega Boys Club helps to instill some character in each young individual that comes to see them and comes to talk to them. It's just about yourself. Like Jack said, it's half us. We go out there and we try to get them, we try to talk to them; we try to counsel them. But you've got to help yourself also. And LaMerle and him and him and all of us came to it with inside ourselves. There's always something inside every guy, every guy, every gang member out there. There's something inside of them. You just get on the side that wants to quit, wants to stop. And what we need is we need more people like those three back there to reach out and touch them.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: Well, what if, you know, your job, you have your housing taken care of and you have your food taken care of and your clothes taken care you wouldn't need to make that much per hour. You could save a tremendous amount of money. You know, the minimum wage is below \$4 an hour and you fellows are talking about \$6 an hour. There's a lot of people in our society who would like to have a job for \$6 an hour.

I appreciate your comments. You know, you've told me honestly what you think and what you

feel. You haven't pulled any punches. And we don't often get that kind of treatment around here. People tell us what they think we'd like to hear and I appreciate the fact you guys aren't putting us down or kidding us.

MR. AIKINS: It seems like it's a good idea for you but you seem to just think that the problem is: People just need money. It's not like that. Dollar signs ain't all that people see when they're out there, you know. You can give me -- let's say I want to go and I want to work. Well, minors might necessarily not want to do that type of work. And let's say I have the heart to go to an office and be a financial adviser. But no, you're telling me I've got to work for the Conservation Corps. What if I don't want to do that?

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: Well, we've got other ones you could select.

MR. AIKINS: Yeah, but see, it's sort of like -- don't get me wrong because I'm not trying to downplay it. But it seems a little like mandatory marshal law type of thing. You know, if you don't work, if you don't go out there and do this, here's what we're going give you. We're going to give you a list of what you can pick. Pick from this list and that's what you're going to be.

Most people don't want to -- you know, we don't want to be told what to do. Most youths don't want to be told what to do in that term. You know, we want to be able to make our own choices on certain things. Like jobs is just one of the few problems because like I got a lot of buddies out there who got a lot of potential who, as a matter of fact, who've got their jobs but just sell drugs just for the whatever because they're missing something. It's just necessarily isn't the money 'cause you got people that might as well just retire out there -- they sold so much drugs. But no, they're going to keep on doing it. The question is why.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: I think Senator -- excuse me -- Senator McCorquodale has a few questions.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: You've certainly answered my question and I would just tell you that one of the ways to defer is through staying in school and so you don't have the choice of just a public service job or the military. You would have the ability to stay in school. So that's kind of on the model of draft, you know. And the other thing is, too, in the Conservation Corps, it offers an awful lot of togetherness, I heard you folks talking about, and maybe too much, as far as you're concerned.

MR. KING: Okay. May I say something for a second. I had a friend in the Conservation Corps and he liked it at first. But then as he went -- I say he was in for about two months and he said he would come home, you know, his father, they didn't have any room for him. So he said, "Man, I'm going to quit." I said, "Why you going to quit? That's a nice job. You're getting paid." He said, "Yeah, it's cool. But, you know, they have us doing exercises; that's okay too. But they have a little G.E.D. session and it's like it's for stupid people." And I said, "Why you say that?" He said, 'cause, he said, "'Cause they sit up there teaching words that I'll never use again. I ain't gonna talk that. I'm going to find another job."

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: Did he find another job?

MR. KING: Yes, he did. But the point that I'd like to make is basically what my brother was saying is that this is a democratic country and the democracy, in my opinion, is that we have the

right to choose what we would like to be.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Democracy does not allow you to deliberately break the law.

MR. KING: We're not talking about breaking the law. As he was saying ...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Yeah, I know.

MR. KING: Okay.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: But, you see, when you are engaged, unfortunately, in a practice that is not popular with an awful lot of folks, those folks are going to tell the police department.

MR. KING: We're not talking about selling drugs right now. We're talking instead that if you weren't going to school, and at 16, if you decide not to go to school, you don't have to. So therefore, if you're planning, in effect, at the age of 16, if I stop going to school, I will be down to join the Conservation Corps or the military. And as Andre just said, what if I don't want to?

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: Or some other?

MR. KING: Or some other thing. But what if what you select isn't down there? And that's another reason why a lot of people don't go to school and drop out because what they want to learn isn't in school. It's just a little group of things that we can study. But what we really want to learn, we don't have. And when we try to get them, the principal says you've got to go talk to the Board of Education. The Board of Education says we can't do it.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: Excuse me. Whoever proposed this, he just proposed a way to rebel. You asked if people rebel. I mean, like, what if they just said, okay, I'm not doing either so you just make it harder and harder? You should come up with a better program and put something out there instead of saying, okay, you're going to do this and you're going to do that. This is what you're going to have to do. And you might do this or work -- what was it that you said? Conservation program?

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: Conservation Corps, public service, the military. As an alternative, people have suggested some kind of scholarship for junior college.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: What they're suggesting -- I mean have you asked the people would they actually go through it themselves?

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: Would they go through it themselves?

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: Yeah.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: Most of the people who suggested it went through the military.

MR. AIKINS: I have one comment on the military. Me, myself, I had tried to get into the military. But, see, do I -- excuse me. But do I seem like the lowest form on earth to you?

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: Why would that be a problem from going into the military?

MR. AIKINS: Because that's what they basically ...

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: It might come as a shock.

MR. AIKINS: They told me that I was the lowest form on earth because I used to sell drugs, you know, and they wouldn't let me into the military.

Now the circumstances behind this was real funny. I filled out -- basically, I passed the G.E.D. I passed that AZAP test with a 51 which allowed me -- I had a job in the military. I was going to be a

single channel radio operator, be able to fix teletypes and run them. This is what I was guaranteed. I was supposed to leave three days later, after I got my job. So I got this job on Monday and I was supposed to leave on Thursday, I do believe. I was filling out these forms and getting fingerprinted on government I.D. The State asked me a series of questions. They said, "Have you ever used or sold narcotics?" I said, "I never used or sold." And they said, "Is it on the form?" I said, "It might. I can't honestly remember; it should be, though." My recruiter told me to go again and put, just say no on them questions. So I then read them and I put a lot of no's. That was a little mistake on my part, a little mistake on my part. I go in there and then I filled out the other one and I read 'em, and I put the truth on them: Yes, I've sold. No, I've never been arrested. But yes, I sold some. But that was good enough to get me in basically that much far. So they say, "Oh, well, we see an irregularity in here. One says yes; one says no. Which is it?"

So I explained it to them. So they say, "Okay. We'll give you the benefit of the doubt. Well, you sell drugs. We need to send you to the psychiatrist so we can find out why you sold drugs." So they send me to this dude, sitting up in a chair in a white coat.

"Why did you sell drugs?"

"To make money."

"Well, we don't like that conduct in the Army."

"I'm not doing it anymore. And if I was in boot camp, where am I going to get some dope from, you know?" But all that was irrelevant. I was disqualified because I used not do, never arrested, in perfect health, but I used to sell drugs. And I wanted to change my life around but they wouldn't give me the opportunity.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: That's the thing. These kinds of jobs would be directed at getting you involved in these programs before you got into that.

MR. AIKINS: No, but see, you're saying at 16. Before you get into that, it comes, it starts when you're down here, at least four or five years old, when you were a little kid because when you're a little kid, you're asking for knowledge.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: So you've got to have some kind of waiver on your prior activities. Is that what you're saying? Some kind of forgiveness for prior ...

MR. AIKINS: See, that's what they told me. They said that they have a waiver of forgiveness. All you got to do is tell it straight up. So I told them.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: I've taken more of my share of time than these ...

SENATOR WATSON: Let me see what Mr. Johnson has to say here.

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: Well, basically, what we are trying to say is this: We understand about what you're saying about the military or the Conservation Corps or whatever organization you have.

What the Omega Boys Club offers us is our young people can turn to Mr. Preston and Mr. Marshall and Mr. Jacqua. Our young people can turn to us. You know, we don't discriminate against any age. We are just about the young people of today, trying to give good advice, trying to get away from any drug dealing, trying to get away from that, promote knowledge. Some of us don't want to

go to school. Some of us just want to get jobs. There's a place in the work force for them.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELDER: Where do you get a good job because you've got to go to school.

MR. LAMERLE JOHNSON: Right. See, Army does not. It doesn't come to our five- or six-year-old children who are having a problem at home because mommy and daddy don't work or Mr. Jacqua or Mr. Marshall or Mr. Preston will, and that's what we need. And I felt if I would have had that a long time ago, I wouldn't be up here talking to you right now because I would be at some school and taking care of my business right now.

MR. KING: And see, the thing about it is the Boys Club, what it gave us, is the alternative from the street because a lot of times -- as a matter of fact, I have a lot of friends that sell drugs right now. But we had a gym that was down the street from our house and we used to go to it every day. But the gym closed so everyone started selling drugs. Then I started selling drugs because they were selling drugs. But what Mr. Marshall and Preston and Mr. Jacqua gave to me was to get me out of that, to show me that there's something else to life besides money, besides going around and trying to be with the crowd and doing everything that everyone else is doing. They showed me to get back to my values that my grandmother told me as I was a child, to get back to my morals that my mother and my father taught me, showed me that I must come up and help my brothers and sisters to get out of this dilemma that we're in. Because in my opinion, another thing that they taught me is no matter what color you are -- white, black, Chinese, or whatever -- if you rip off the skin, there's nothing but flesh and blood and we all have that in common.

How can you get somebody a job if they don't have any morals about themselves? You say that they don't go to school. Then they come out of the projects or something. They need direction and they need counseling. You can't just go provide them a job if he's not going to school. That's insane. That's what the Boys Club is about. They give us direction. I mean you can seriously sit down -- these are human beings. They might not have been in the situation, they might not, but they can sit down and they can talk to us.

SENATOR WATSON: Are you saying they need jobs to really help in building character first?

MR. KING: They need to know they are somebody.

SENATOR WATSON: Morality base to establish a mores base to establish some structure in which they can then be a family group or whatever you call it.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: Mine calls it the rehabilitation center, if you'd like to use your word ...

SENATOR WATSON: So you have to build over a period of years what they've lost in those years. In other words, they started way down here.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: It doesn't take years. It can take ...

SENATOR WATSON: No, I mean you have to build over those years that were lost.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: Right, right. You can't just throw them into some professional setting or something.

SENATOR WATSON: I see.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: And say do this. I mean where does all that come from? It usually

comes from your parents and that's what a lot of people are lacking out there. That's why they're out there and that's what we're saying, my colleagues are saying.

SENATOR WATSON: Senator McCorquodale.

SENATOR DAN McCORQUODALE: I just wanted to say something. One of the problems that we have -- we're dealing with a lot more -- you think you're dealing with simplistic things. We're dealing with a lot more simplistic things probably than you might think about in how we deal with problems that confront society today. The issue of education growing into jobs may actually have no relevance at all except that somebody who has the job sets some standard and then they say that's what it's going to be.

And you touched a little bit on the area that seems to me that we have to go back and try to deal with because we may be able to deal with when you talked about the five- and six-year-old. Are there areas from your experience that -- it's hard for us to replicate the Omega Boys Club. I mean we can't just pass a bill and say, okay, Omega Boys Club in every community. Clone those three fellows back there and everything's going to be all right. Are there other things, though, that we can go beyond that? What are other issues that -- if we say that it's a given that in order to get a job, you're going to have to be able to read, were there problems back there that should have been done differently in education, would children graduating from elementary school --

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: Yeah.

SENATOR McCORQUODALE: -- and going to high school, they can read -- the things that we could deal with the ...

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: It's the family structure and that's what we promote. We promote the family structure and that's the main thing about the Omega Boys Club. To answer your question about, when you said, well, we can't just go out and say, well, yeah, we're going to have an Omega Boys Club in every city, that's not what it's about. What it's about is the Omega Boys Club builds character within ourselves. Like, for example, me and Andre took it upon ourselves to go into Oakland, which is also a troubled city, to go over and talk to these different kids, junior high schools and high schools, and let them know where we're coming from, you know, and try to talk to them. This is an outreach program. We go out there and try to really touch somebody, you know. It's really personal, you know. It's more than just saying here, take this and go do that. There's a lot of that out there but there's not enough of hey, come here, let me talk to you because that's what I need. That's what all of us need.

SENATOR McCORQUODALE: Mr. Elder was talking about the Conservation camp. I just thought I'd put in a little aside. We have 5,000 young people enrolled in a very aggressive conservation camp. It's called Sierra Conservation Camp and it's up by Jamestown. It costs us about \$30,000 a year for each one of those people enrolled in that. And it's amazing; you're all different ages. But from this perspective, though, it's pretty close to the same age. If I lined up 30 or 40 of those young people up there, they may be 24 or 25 instead of 23 but they still look about the same age. And it's just too bad that we have the greatest dropout program in operation anywhere in the world, in this state. We put \$2 million a year in dealing with dropout programs, but they call it in the

Department of Corrections some kind of program in education. However, we've got to figure out how to divert that money into a more positive direction.

MR. AIKINS: They can go into family counseling because people have forgotten what it means to be a family. You know, when pop stays gone all day from the house and mom's smoked out, and you have a little brother and a little sister that's depending on you, you've got to make a choice right there. You can either spend your time in school -- and let that PG&E go -- they cut that power off because they ain't going to allow for mom and pop's mistakes. They're going to take it out on you too. So you got to get out there and you've got to do the best you can. So people have forgotten how to be fathers; people have forgotten how to be mothers, you know, because before you could raise a child -- you heard of public enemy, right? Blake McGuire said, "No woman can raise no man because a man has to be that role model to teach a man how to be a man," you know. If you're four years old and you constantly see dad hanging out on the corner beating mom, what are they going to grow up thinking life is about? Because at that age, that's when your mind is growing, just wanting to fill with knowledge. And if you're going to fill it, then all you're doing and all ...(tape turned over)... he's going to grow up following in his father's footsteps or maybe worse. Maybe his next door neighbor's footsteps. So I said we need some money to go into a family structure type of thing.

When I was smaller, my father never took me nowhere. My father never sat me down to talk, never. And what he thought was being a man was never crying. What he thought was being a man was not being able or to be gone, to just be able to go, constantly work, you know. He could show love and all that, but it was a macho type of thing. Nobody never told me, when I was smaller, you know, you're a human; you have feelings. You're going to be hurt and you need help. When you need help, ask for it.

When you're growing up, nowadays, they try to teach you what's out there. If you ask for help, you're a sissy. If you're going to cry, you're a sissy. If you go running home to mom, it's, oh, you're going to talk to your mom about this? Oh, you ain't nothing. You can't be with us. Be a man about it, you know. Handle it. Nobody teaches no more -- come to me, talk to me. And even if it ain't mom and pop, you should be able to go next door and talk to somebody. It ain't right that nowadays, we're watching out for the next neighbor because the next neighbor might be another Charles Manson.

SENATOR WATSON: Yes, sir.

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: To just touch back upon the educational basis that you were just talking about, in my opinion, because I talk to a lot of my friends and we talk about school sometimes because a lot of my friends are dropouts. And it's like I said earlier, you know, it's just a lot of things that aren't interesting in school for you, such as, I've used this as an example: Black education, or I'll just say, African history. You know, we go in school and we study American history and we study about Germans and Russians and French. But we hardly ever see anything for ourselves in there for the black American. And then when we go to college, it's mandatory that we learn American history once again but it's not mandatory that we learn African history.

Now you say that you'd like to figure out ways that we can keep kids in school. If you have a teenager that wants to be a mechanic -- yes, they learn math, English, history, and a few other

things -- why can't you take mechanics as a requirement also, add it on?

SENATOR McCORQUODALE: But you see, it's a competitive situation. And we may not be right. But I'm just saying that that's the -- so we've put in all these areas in order to try to determine that if a person gets to some point, then you depend on them to graduate from high school. It's not always true. But then you come to me and you want a job. Then I figure if you have accomplished reading reasonably well and you can follow instructions, you've disciplined yourself to stay and you go back to the point that then you move out. I'm not saying that you can't, but it's part of the competitive situation. It's probably getting worse rather than better.

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: But a lot of jobs you take today require experience. And, see, for a lot of teenagers, once they get out of school, they can go to college.

SENATOR McCORQUODALE: But are you moving too fast? I mean I got out of high school and I thought I was going to do just fine and I didn't need to get an education, didn't need to go to college. And I'm sympathetic to what Mr. Elder was saying because if the Marine Corps hadn't convinced me that I was lower than slime, then I don't know what I would have done because, you know, I spent some time there and decided I didn't want to put up with that. And I saw the necessity of going on and getting a college education. Frankly, I think I learned a lot more in the Marine Corps.

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: I understand.

SENATOR McCORQUODALE: And at other times I wasn't in college, I learned in college. But once I had that paper, nobody questioned that I didn't work ..

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: But you still -- but it's like, I'd like to major in psychology when I get to college. But I can't study psychology until I get to college. Why can't we have courses that interest me also? I might not take it as a requirement but, you know, why can't we have those courses, something interesting, that would make us want to go to school, not just go and study things we don't want to hear about but something that we like to learn?

SENATOR WATSON: All right.

MR. MARSHALL: Yes. I just want to make a comment about these young men who are all very talented. What you have here are four young men who told you what essentially changed their lives. And I think you're very fortunate to have them tell you what works, what works, not what we think would work or we hope would work, what we surmise would work, what plan. They're telling you what has turned them away from gang, violence, and drugs.

Now I think what we ought to do is look at exactly what it is that they're saying and try -- and you say you can't clone it -- I think you can clone it. It appears that peer counseling has worked. They've been able to go into youth detention facilities and turn guys from criminals into upstanding citizens. Then you need to put some money in this. There's no doubt about it because it's working. You can't -- if it's already working and you've got a track record, why guess at something you hope might make a difference, that is, if you want to solve the problem? And I think you have to keep that clearly in front of you -- what your objective is. I think you can do a lot of things with money. I think you can pay people like this to do peer counseling. I think you can set up programs. I think you can support counseling and tutoring programs. I mean you know your guidelines better than I do but I

think there are definitely ways and programs that you can put in, akin to what they're talking to if you possibly can to make it work. Other than that, I'll tell you, you will not solve the problem. You will be here in 2010 talking about the ways to turn people off from gangs and drugs. What you have here is something that is working. And look, I'm going to tell you something, the only thing that doesn't work is that there's not enough of them because if there was more of them -- if we were in Los Angeles, and I'm using it as a good example -- and we're trying to get there -- you would not have the Blood and the Crips that you have, because these guys would be out there reaching them and getting to them because they're waiting for a program like this also.

SENATOR WATSON: How much training goes into bringing these young men where they are today? They're very articulate; they are able to handle the situation. They seem to be very calm and very controlled. Now I know that this didn't happen because they were coming here to the Capitol. But, you know, I'm right in the heart of the carnage right now. I represent a district in Los Angeles and our kids are getting killed everyday. We're bringing it to the mothers on the street, the Mother's March For Peace, on Sunday to see if we can appeal to their mothers.

I need you to tell me how we can -- the Omegas aren't down in Los Angeles. How can we duplicate this program?

MR. MARSHALL: Let me say this and I want to correct this. Number 1, it was always here. I've got to say that. It was always here. It was never brought out of them, okay?

MR. PRESTON WORTHY: What happened is is that ...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: I think we would like to hear from you because ...

SENATOR WATSON: Identify yourself.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: One of you young men, do you want to give a seat to the gentleman?

MR. WORTHY: My name is Preston Worthy and I'm the Assistant Director of the Omega Boys Club.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: You've got to speak into the mike, please.

MR. WORTHY: Yes. My name is Preston Worthy. I'm the Assistant Director of the Omega Boys Club. And to answer your question, Ms. Watson, is that we have a study hall. We meet on Tuesday nights. And for an hour, hour-and-a-half, up to two hours, we as a group, we sit down and we create strategies and we look into some of the serious areas where most of these problems are existing: attitude, discipline, responsibility, self respect, respecting education, and fantasy as well.

We sit around and we discuss how can we bring or how do we talk about these areas to a Senate meeting or to political people. What happens is that these young men believe that they've had similar problems. We bring this out while sitting around discussing it; this is the major problem. A lot of these young people want to be rich. A lot of them want to be talked to about what we're talking about right here. And one of the things that is happening is that we are committed in going out to the community, Youth Guidance Center, the schools, playground recreation centers, and asking these kids, what do you want to do in life? Okay. And after they answer what they want to do in life, what is providing -- what is preventing you from doing these things in life? And what we have found out, Senator Deddeh, is discipline and then attitude. It's one and two, the primary reasons why these kids

are not promoting themselves and not feeling good about themselves.

Then we talked to them about you can feel good and we talked to them about caring. And we have found out through caring is a way to bring out insecurity, self-defeating attitudes, self pity, hate, judgmental attitudes, being irritable or discontent. So these are areas that we talk about on how we can go out and reach these young people. And what we have found out by doing this is most of these young people are very grateful; they're very satisfied; and most of all, they're very happy there's someone out there to talk to them about it because we are telling them, we are asking them, and we're expecting that you can be somebody. And as we have mentioned before, if I can just finish, it starts at a very early age. If there aren't any programs to teach our young kids of what it is to care for themselves and to build character -- but before we build character, we have to understand the characteristics that would build character, you see. And so these things are not being built in. And respect is something else that helps us to reach these young people. So we do spend two or three hours every Tuesday night looking at different areas. He might go into areas of attitude. We might go into areas of education. He might go into areas of discipline. And we might go into areas of responsibility. We've all had that problem. We want to get that problem worked out. And that is a great asset, that is, a great percentage of our outreach program is looking at the real basic and survival skills that we need to survive in this society.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Let me tell you what I might do. I want the young man to go back. I've got a few more witnesses. I'll call you back after we hear the other witnesses and then we sort of interact and see what your reaction would be. Is that okay?

All right. Yes. Excuse me. Yes.

MR. JACQUA: Want me to use this or ...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Yeah, I want you to use the mike because this is recorded.

MR. JACQUA: Yes. I just have a few quick comments. I appreciate Mr. Elder's concern and I think that, again, like Mr. Marshall said, that peer counseling does work. And I think, with Mr. Elder's Civilian Conservation Corps or the military, that probably, it would be a good possibility that we create some jobs for young men in relation to being a peer counselor -- as a job. The other comment I wanted to make, Senator Watson mentioned, and that is, the fact that the young men who are here are well grounded and so on. But they have just been reached. And the thing is that there are, you know, so many young men out there. Most of the young men out there are, you know, are exactly the way these young men are except no one has been out there -- the system has not brought these great potential things out of the young men. And we're saying that these things, these qualities, are already there. There are hopes there and there are desires and there are dreams there. And the system, unfortunately, is not bringing, the family is not bringing those hopes, those dreams, out of these young men. But if we can get the peer counselors out there, that will certainly help bring some of these things out.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Thank you very much. Our next witness -- and I'm going to ask you to be brief because I want to call these young men back and I want them to react to the other witnesses that we're going to hear. Mr. Berkowitz -- excuse me. I'm sorry. Well, Senator Dills -- I'm sorry.

SENATOR RALPH C. DILLS: Thank you. I'll just be a minute. I'm very much impressed with these young men. I represent the area that you might understand as the southern part of Watts and Compton part from that area, 80 percent black, 38 percent Hispanic. There's also a 10 percent Asian/Pacific population. The problem is, having been their teacher, having been in that area, having been in touch with these things ever since the so-called Watts riot, there's no need to qualify myself as far as I'm concerned. I want to compliment the young men; and I have heard such words as discipline, self-repose, self-respect, no family, education -- yes, education is one of them -- and peer counseling. Those are things that we know are needed. Basically, we fail in education because we don't try to get them help from the first. The word "education" comes from two Latin words: "e" or "ex" means out and "ducere" means to lead or bring out what you are. Every one of you is an individual. Every one of you has great possibilities. But somewhere along the line, you haven't had an opportunity to get that out and put it into service the way that these men are delivering to you and use for others.

However we up here have, we have an obligation and a need because it is truly -- this country of ours is going to be taken over. We're going to lose this country, not to the "evil empire" but from our own weakness, our own lack of attending to our fellow man -- our brothers. We want to help in any way we can to help these young men who come before this Legislature. We want to do something about it. We're trying to represent our people down below.

But what you have given us here today is a success story as far as it goes. What we want to know is how, at least I want to, is how we can take that which you've given us, implement it, and put it into practice in the State of California without setting up a lot of organizations and groups that are just looking for some money to spend and to use some power structures -- one against the other kind of thing. It's going to be a difficult thing. And I think you have brought to us what we need to consider, is the extent to which, the manner in which we can do policy that we can follow and procedures and successful programs which you have given us. We get all sorts of ideas from everybody how to do "it". We're missing now -- and I know this is maybe going to be difficult to get more information from you. We compliment you for your work here. And believe us, we know how much it's costing. It's costing more than dollars; it's costing human lives, people that have a right. They're Americans that are Anglo or African or whatever. People have the right to have some of the good things in life that we call success -- something where they feel like they're worth something and we'd better fill that need. We have to try to arrest this need and forget -- it doesn't matter who gets the credit points, so long as you get the job done. There's a lot of people who do a lot of good things and never get the credit for it. It doesn't make any difference. They go and they do it for a human life. I'm sorry to keep you.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Senator Nielsen.

SENATOR JIM NIELSEN: Mr. Chairman, if I may, just very briefly, note to the Committee as well a similar connotation on my part. I do have to depart before 4:30 and I did not want to leave here without also saying how very impressed I am with your organization, Omega, and these young men and how incredibly articulate they were. I hope that maybe some of you would one day aspire to

sit up here and it is through the greatness of our society that you can aspire to do that, particularly with your eloquence and your ideas and visions and dreams, I believe that you can. And you have come before the Legislature, somewhat unusual, with a very optimistic point of view about a very difficult area. I am not unmindful of what you're talking about. I hear you. The gang problems that you speak of in the inner cities that Senators Dills and Watson, who far more have the affliction of, are also coming into my more rural area of Northern California. There's a number of anti-drug and anti-crime bills that I'm carrying. A connection I am making throughout the state is the urban and rural connection.

That which afflicts you is also coming out into our areas, and that which is produced in our area, becomes a product that you see being sold in the urban areas. But what I am particularly delighted with is your eloquence and your patience and I thank you too.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: I want to have the privilege of introducing a lady, a Member of this Committee, that just joined us. She is Assemblymember Maxine Waters. In her own right, she's Chair of the Democratic Caucus in the Assembly and she's with us and I'm delighted to have you, Maxine.

As I said, we have a few more witnesses. I'm going to ask them to take whatever time they need. I hope they'll be brief because I want to bring the four boys back -- and I wanted them to react to these testimonies that we're going to hear and then can interact for a while. I hope we can quit by 5 o'clock.

Next, Mr. Berkowitz, Joe Berkowitz from the Log Cabin Ranch.

MR. JOE BERKOWITZ: Yes, thank you very much for inviting me. I do have a short statement. First, let me state that the Omega Boys Club, having come down to Log Cabin, which is affiliated with San Francisco Juvenile Court, the last six or seven months, I, myself, got involved with the Bureau of Corrections for the past 17 years. I can say clearly that there's been no more powerful intervention that I have witnessed in terms of our kids at Log Cabin listening for the first time, in terms of the emotion that it's generated, in terms of the young men, the Omegas, emoting and demonstrating something relative to our kids and for the first time our kids walking away with some hope and actually feeling that there may be an alternative, there may be a way out.

We think that a lot of our kids on a one-on-one basis would like to find a way out of the drugs and the turf wars. But they tell us that they're trapped. The peer pressure is just tremendous. The society pressure is just tremendous. I think what the Omegas does, I think it does in a very successful fashion, is provide for some youth who want an alternative when they leave our facility. What the Omega Boys Club does is provide for a place where these kids can go and gain a sense of self-esteem, gain a sense of belonging, gain a sense of worth. And I think that's what we're really talking about here. I thank the Omegas. I commend them for the incredible -- what your peer group does -- and you're right. Don't spend too much time talking to me. Talk to the youth.

Let me take a quick two minutes and then read a quick statement. Those of us who work with inner-city youth realize that we are in the midst of a crisis and I'd like to take a few minutes of your time. At Log Cabin, we currently house 65 youth, between the ages of 15 and 18. Approximately 70 percent of our population are there for drug-related offenses and 85 percent of our youth are

black.

To dramatize the nature of the change in our facility, let me tell you that as recently as two years ago, only 15 percent of our youth were permitted for drug-related offenses and about 55 percent of our youth were black. Everyone who works in the field of juvenile corrections, especially in urban areas, knows that the nature of delinquency has undergone drastic changes and our juvenile justice system is overloaded. The crack phenomenon is very real and will not go away. The crack phenomenon is new but the causes are very old, and they are tied to inequality of opportunity, poverty, and alienation, and despair.

How does the system convince youth to stop selling crack when he's making big money for the first and only time in his life? How can those of us in the correction field attempt to counteract the sense of belongingness that youth gets from his peers when they band together for a common cause, even if that common cause is to protect and glorify their turf?

Recently a youth at Log Cabin wrote the following in the Range newsletter, and I quote: "It's not the drugs; it's not the money. It's wanting to be known," end quote.

We all want to be known. Those of us raised in the land of opportunity went to school and received a good education and landed a good job and in this way we fulfilled our strong need to be known, to be somebody. How can we help our youth so that they too can become known? What can we provide for these youth that will take the place of the status they enjoy when they have lots of money for the first time? What can we utilize that will counteract the tremendous sense of belonging and importance they get from their street gangs? They are now somebody. The key terms here, I believe, are status and a sense of belonging and importance. We all need it and we all seek it at our own levels.

If we are to begin to make a dent in working with our youth, we must alter these alternatives which will provide them with this status and the sense of belonging and importance. And I strongly believe that the Omega Boys Club provides such alternatives.

Over six months ago, the Omega Boys Club began coming to our facility on a biweekly basis. They talk to our youth about drugs, about the importance of staying in school, about turf wars, about black-on-black crime, and about the Omegas and the family. Our youth are always intent listeners and contributors. Very real issues are being dealt with in a powerful way. The peer counselors who comprise the Omegas are proud of their identity. This is a group of young men who are pointing their lives in a positive direction. In order for our youth to begin to change, we must first get them to listen and yet our youth stopped listening to authority figures a long time ago. But these youths will listen to their peers. And when the message is a positive one, and when it comes from somebody with the same background, the ingredients are there for change to begin.

Our youth are hesitant. It is very difficult to cross over. But at least for the first time, some of our youth see an alternative, an alternative which redirects them back to school, away from drugs, and at the same time provides our youth with status, a sense of belonging and importance, and perhaps most importantly, love and a feeling of hope. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MAXINE WATERS: The Senator had to leap out for a moment. You're

Mr. Berkowitz; is that correct?

MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WATERS: Are there any questions or any comments to Mr. Berkowitz on the ...

SENATOR WATSON: Yeah, let me ask a question about Log Cabin Ranch. These young people are referred from the courts to Log Cabin? I suppose ...

MR. BERKOWITZ: These are the post-adjudicated. These young men who go to Youth Guidance Center for detention, awaiting court, have been through the adjudication process. And as a post-adjudication, they are committed to our facility. Our facility is a long-term rehabilitative residential place. Kids live there; they sleep there; they go to school there. They stay there for approximately eight months to a year. The idea is for them to receive some counseling, some schooling, some vocational counseling, to begin slowly to reintegrate them back into the community, and eventually to return to hopefully living a corrected lifestyle.

SENATOR WATSON: Do you feel, from your own experience, that this is a necessary next step, that half way, that gradual involvement back into the community? Is that Log Cabin program that next step?

MR. BERKOWITZ: I think for some of our youth, what they need, they need a whole lot of things. But what they need sometimes is a time out. What they're dealing with is an incredibly hectic and damaging lifestyle. And sometimes it's a good idea to remove them from the community, to build up literally their physical well-being, to provide them with three square meals a day, to get them back in a routine, many times, for the first time in years, on a regular basis. I think what Log Cabin tries to do -- I think what all camps try to do -- and I think Mr. Worthy alluded to -- we're talking about discipline; we're talking about structure. We're talking about imparting some of these values and then slowly beginning to return these youth to the community.

SENATOR WATSON: Where does -- in this final question -- where does the peer counseling get best?

MR. BERKOWITZ: I'm not sure I understand that question. What we see at Log Cabin -- let me just briefly take a minute -- when we have the Omegas come down, roughly twice a month, is our youth are always anxiously awaiting them. They might rub elbows literally playing basketball, and other physical exercise. Then there's an hour or hour-and-a-half formal process where our kids are talked to, by, and with the peer counselors, and also with Jack and Preston. There's informal peer counseling going on that we see where occasionally some of the Omegas will, on the side, talk one-on-one. Basically the strength we're looking at here is that our kids can relate to the Omegas. The Omegas have been there. The Omegas have had the difficult lifestyle that our the kids are currently having. Our kids know that. Our kids know that the Omegas are coming down out of love. They're not getting paid. They're coming down out of, the intent to help their buddies. And I think that's what makes, for the most part, that's why our kids at Log Cabin are very receptive in having the Omega Boys Club come down when they do.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Senator Watson -- Senator Dills.

SENATOR DILLS: Just a brief question. You may have said it. I didn't catch it. How did you get your kids out at the Log Cabin Ranch?

MR. BERKOWITZ: The juvenile court judge basically, upon hearing a case, the decision is made that that particular minor is found guilty of a particular offense. He has, I think, at his disposal a number of alternatives. One, he can send him home on probation or he can send him to a out-of-home placement, which would be a group home, or he can send him to the California Youth Authority, and finally, he can send him to our facility at Log Cabin Ranch.

We run an open setting there. There are no locked doors. It's in a rural area in La Honda. It's a camp setting where they go to school and they work and they get some counseling and some drug testing.

SENATOR DILLS: Are there any other La Honda's about ...

MR. BERKOWITZ: Oh, yes, yes. Many counties run their own camps. I think there are quite a few. I would estimate 20 to 30 counties. I know San Mateo has a camp; Sacramento has camps; Alameda has camps; L.A. has many camps.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WATERS: They're all endangered, at least on this budget that we're confronted with. And one of the things that many of us are just committed to fighting for and not allowed to be cut out because ...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: We're going to need a long time. (Laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WATERS: One of the reasons I wanted to get over here today is because I think that we have got to make this one of the major fights in our budget because in my estimation, if we -- the camps are cut, it's going to be all hell out there. We know that we don't have enough at this point in time. And to talk about taking away funding from these camps is going to put everybody at risk.

One of the things I'm concerned about -- perhaps you can help me with it, or somebody could speak to it, everything that you said in your statement, those are things that I've come to ...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Is Senator Dills through?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WATERS: I've come to recognize. And particularly the feeling of belonging and the sense that somebody cares. I was at a meeting one night when a young man made a rather dramatic statement down in the Lynwood area of Los Angeles. And it was a very harsh statement. He said that they just didn't feel that, you know, mothers and fathers were giving that kind of love. He said, "But one thing is we love each other." And somehow that grabbed me very strongly.

My concern is this: Even after the camps, I am, you know, wondering about the fact that a young man ...(tape turned over)... and I don't know how to or what to do about how you young people who are not -- many are not quite adults yet, who still need some education; they've had some job training, or just a job, how -- and I think that, you know, what I've begun to think is that we're going to have to find a way for people who are younger and younger to be more independent because if I am 17 or 18 years old -- 17 years old, 18 years old -- and I end up in a camp, and I've probably never been out, you know, at some place like Log Cabin or away, make them go to school, make them ready

for a job. But what I really need maybe at that point is that I need a way to make a living and perhaps go to school and have some support out there.

What do we do? I mean how do we do this? Because I can tell you for sure, I have five major housing projects in that area -- Jordan Downs, Nickerson Gardens, Avalon Gardens, Imperial Court, Hacienda. And if the kids gotta come back there, it's very difficult. You cannot be in my section of Los Angeles that I'm describing to you now and not be a Blood or a Crip or something. You just can't. What do we do?

MR. BERKOWITZ: We don't have a real answer. But let me comment, Senator Watson, in terms of where the Omega Boys have been -- also, I'd like to hope and maybe some of us would answer your very-difficult-to-answer question.

What the Omegas also presented is how, when kids leave Log Cabin, and there have been some that still -- you know, it's difficult to cross over. There's a part of them that wants and yet there's a peer pressure. But there are some kids who, when they leave Log Cabin, they now know that there's the Omega Boys Club that will accept them. They have now made connections with the Omegas, with the peer counselors, with Preston and Jack. And there's now, if you will, a follow-up, informal agency that's welcoming them with open arms and is willing to work with them in terms of going to school, staying away from this crazy lifestyle, and leading, hopefully the beginning of a creative, productive life, like I've seen with these four. I think what should be done is not being done. At the very least, we have to find a way to provide these kids, when we have them for the eight months to a year, not just with schooling but with some real type of vocational training.

I heard it here from each kid, from the gentleman who was sitting here, these kids need jobs; they need jobs. We're not talking about McDonald's jobs. We're not talking about no-end jobs that pay minimum wage. We're talking about self-esteem; we're talking about status; we're talking about learning some skills so that there may be a beginning, a part of them, and it's such an incredibly difficult process. And I believe -- I know I'm giving justice for the difficulty and I think the kids can affirm to that fact. But if we can give kids skills, real honest skills, so that they feel good about themselves, they have now the beginnings of some ammunition and we can empower them, which is a difficult process, to stand up on their own and to say to their peers, "Hey, you know, I'm not there anymore. I'm sorry. But now I'm doing this. I have this job or I have the skills."

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WATERS: Do you have some job training?

MR. BERKOWITZ: We have limited job training. I wish we had more. We have basically, at Log Cabin, we have an industrial arts class that provides skills in terms of simple carpentry. We're trying -- in the past, we had job training. The old budget snafu has cut out our vocational training program and we're in the process of trying to recreate our automotive instruction class.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WATERS: Were you using any JTPA money?

MR. BERKOWITZ: Come again?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WATERS: Job Training Partnership Act?

MR. BERKOWITZ: No, no. If I may, I have with me a gentleman who's very knowledgeable in vocational training, Mr. James Jackson. If it'd be okay with you, I'd like to ask him to come up and he

has a lot of experience and I think he would have some comments too.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Okay. Mr. Jackson.

MR. JAMES JACKSON: If you want to make some comments about some of the things that we've been trying to do, in terms vocational programs over the last couple of years, in terms of the funds that we've been searching for, feel free.

Six years ago, about six or seven judges and community leaders formed a group called the Log Cabin Ranch Committee. They felt that it was very, very important for jobs and training programs to be developed, if possible, right within the system.

I was hired, after leaving the Santa Rita County Jail, to be one of the legs along with a gentleman named Bob Price. At that time, it was just on paper. We set out and talked to the judges in the cities, bringing into play linkages and contacts with unions, citizens, and government -- people who had, before that, had frowned upon the very efforts that these young men were trying to save. They couldn't do it by themselves. They were lost. We are, in a sense, interveners. We had great support from Safeway, from Carpenters Union. Many people there just rallied around us there for a moment.

Just quickly jumping up from '83 to '85, the crack thing came around. With that, something happened, not only at that time. But something else happened. We lost both vocational training classes we had. We had at that time electronics, culinary, building maintenance, and automotive. I'm saying that because, as you decide whether you want to go out and help the Omega Boys Club and make them happy and get them started, I hope the same thing wouldn't happen to them that happened in our programs. All these programs were dropped because the school system had to protect the teachers.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Mr. Jackson, what kind of training vocation do you provide at Log Cabin Ranch?

MR. JACKSON: What I'm saying is that just recently we had an electronics training building maintenance; this means construction and carpentry. We had culinary. We had automotive.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: And where did you get the money for that?

MR. JACKSON: First of all, it was through a grant. There were several grants. And then the school system took over. The city felt that was very important to lobby, to provide, and push the school system into it and put them behind the efforts. And shortly after that, the money just got tight, just like what you mentioned, all those programs being dropped. As Berkowitz said, there now is minimal training. We've managed to salvage the building maintenance training or he's bringing in the Conservation Corps that you've mentioned, to supervise the work experience. We're working very hard to get the automotive back, which is a favorite. And that's the basics -- oh, the computer training. That's the extent of what we have right now.

Just before I wrap it up, I must say that the Omega Boys Club -- I've been listening to everybody trying to put this into a perspective. I'm going to put the Omega Boys Club into a perspective for you.

I deal with a lot of youngsters finding job training programs. Just recently, they honestly tell

me they do not want a job. And then when they get tired and a little frustrated from the crack problem and the crack dealing, et cetera, they look for a way out. The Omega Boys Club provides a way out for our youngsters. That's all basically what it does.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Any question before going on? Thank you, sir. Thank you both.

I have Mr. Sweeney. Is Mr. Sweeney here? No? Lincoln Ellis? No. Boys, I want you back, all four of you.

Let me open my remarks by saying Senator Dills said it probably best of all of us, very eloquently. Every one of you young men sitting here, every one of you, is a precious member of this society. You may have strayed at one time but we want you back. You're a valuable member of our society. We want you back, you see. And we're going to do whatever it takes to help get you back.

MR. JOE MARSHALL: We are back.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: All right. I want you to help your friends to get back because there's room for them, you see. Yes, they may make more money pushing crack or doing something, and selling that. They can. But they'll always be looking over their shoulders. They won't know when somebody is going to fire at them, an ex-buddy might shoot at them -- they don't know that. You can help. You can help.

And so I'm going to get you back to tell me and answer Ms. Waters, Senator Watson, Senator McCorquodale, Senator Dills, how can we -- what can we do? How can we help you help us? Yes, sir.

MR. KING: Okay. What you do for the Omega Boys Club is, this is the first one, but I'm sure the people in the other communities like Jack, Preston, and Marshall and you can provide funding for people who want to start something like that or a place where they can start something like that because, it's out there. You know, it's out there.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: And another way you can help us is to provide funding for us so that we can get out to different places that we haven't had a chance to get to before so we can talk to more youth and more adults so that, for the people that are, and see the same things that we see, can get out there and do the same thing. It can spread.

MR. AIKINS: Because some of us want to go to school. Some of us want to be, whatever we want to be, like he wants to be a psychologist or counselor. But some of us, like myself, I would like to make a career of this. I would like to, you know, because my heart's into it and I want to do this for a living. I would like to do this. And we have other people within our organization that want to go out there but we need the money and we need your help to get out there and try to help these youngsters.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: And the most valuable thing you can give, not only to us but to the brothers and the sisters that's lost out there, is just your love, your love in your heart. You don't need, we don't need hollow people out there because we've got enough. And I'm sure, in all of our lives, that more than one time or another, we experience hollow people. And that's why a lot of youth don't trust grownups because there's too many hollow people out there. What we would like to have is some kind of way that, for those to develop a system to find out who's for real and who's not.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: And I agree with you. I agree with you. I think you're correct. I cannot advise my son because I'm 30 years older than he is, you see. He doesn't trust me. But he would probably feel more comfortable with somebody his age, who speaks his language. It's very understandable, very understandable.

Let me ask you a question: I've heard the remark being made that eventually, as you come out from whatever, whether it is Log Cabin or wherever, and you go back to your neighborhood, have you had that experience? Did you go back to your neighborhood? And if you did, what was your experience back at the old neighborhoods? I don't care which one answers, any one of you. Mr. Johnson.

MR. AIKINS: They basically tried to pull me back to the same old job. And then I told them I was with Omega Boys Club. But now, whereas when I walked around the grocery store on the corner, I probably would have stopped and joined them. Here, I keep going.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: They don't hassle you?

MR. AIKINS: They may call me a little punk, stuff like that. But, you know, that lasted for a little while. But now it's, "Oh, man. Wow, man, you've changed." You know, they respect me. I talked to them about the Omega Boys Club.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Good. And in the long-run then, you're a hell of a lot better than they are. Ms. Waters.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WATERS: Were you accosted? Were you threatened?

MR. AIKINS: Well, with me, it was kind of hard because, as you know, Omega's based in San Francisco and I started this thing in Oakland. And like for a long time, I felt like, man, I'm by myself because mostly all the people I know, I say, except for two, maybe not, maybe not even any more, had something to do with doing this illegal thing or another.

So basically when I traveled, I would hang around and then get to that stuff. And I would like, man, I ain't with it no more. I ain't with it no more. The peer pressure is going to be there no matter what. But see, that will just prove to a lot of the teenagers and to other people what you're really made of. And I was able to arise upon that. And to a point, I would have to call Mr. Marshall or Jack, or not necessarily them. I could call somebody in the Club my own age to talk to 'cause they know more what it's about than maybe Mr. Marshall would or maybe Preston or Jack. So doing that, it enabled me to be able to stand on my own two feet at last or be able to just chill with the fellows. And when they want to go and do something wrong, I just let them know, you know, you know how I feel about it. You know, you know what he's doing. So you can't say that you don't have that knowledge because you know it's wrong so it's on you.

SENATOR McCORQUODALE: Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Senator McCorquodale.

SENATOR McCORQUODALE: As a practical matter, the one place that we have a tremendous increase in our state budget, that has increased so much faster than anything else in the state, is the Department of Corrections. So if I could convince my constituents -- the people who like me, that we ought to divert some of that money over to creating peer counselors, the Omega Boys Club,

whatever they would call it, that we were able to do that, they might be tolerant for a while and say, okay, we'll watch your experiment and we'll see whether it'll do any good or not. And then, so we started -- and you have to deal with one on one. And so your former friends that are around the corner get involved in a drive-by shooting and that then changes the whole picture of what we are dealing with. And so my constituents here -- and they'll say, well, the system doesn't work. How do we, how do we portray an image when there's a change in the direction other than this mad rush we're on for this tremendous expenditure of money for Corrections? How do we deal with that?

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: The boss wants this guy to speak. (Laughter) You can answer, yeah.

MR. KING: Okay. One thing, that no matter what you're dealing with, you have to realize that life goes on, regardless of what you do. The second thing is that, as it was stated earlier, to put it in a percentage range, you can't even put it in a percentage range out of all the kids that we've ever dealt with. You might say there have only been two members that haven't made it. And now in the group, we have about -- 120 members? -- about 120 members. And there's only two people that have dropped out. Now for those two people, they have called back, they have written back, saying that they want to come back and make a change and will you still help us? And we said, "Yes," because that's what we're all about because we realize that you can make mistakes in life. And for the people for which you see a heart you point out the good direction towards these instead of the bad. You can just look at us and see.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Senator McCorquodale is so correct. And I'll throw a figure at you and see how our priorities are screwed up. It's so screwed up, God knows.

God forbid, if any one of you were to be behind bars locked up for one year for a felony and you're sentenced to jail for one year, you know what you would cost the people of California to spend on you? Between \$23,000 to \$26,000 a year. That's what it costs, \$23,000 to \$26,000. And here we are, with hardly spending any money and young men like you -- decent, sincere, honest, trying to be a role model for their peers -- what is in the budget -- Ms. Waters? Nothing?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WATERS: No. As a matter of fact, I guess my question to you today before I leave is, if this is one of the camps that's being defunded in the general way that the Governor's been cutting these camps, that, you know, we want there to be enough money for that. If we're in for a special line item -- I mean, yeah, line item -- I wanted to know about that today. Is this a special line item or does this come under the general camps?

SENATOR McCORQUODALE: I think the camp issue would be affected by whatever we decided to do with the AB 90 money, the Governor's proposal. So is the budget cutting that out, that's an allocation to the County that's made this more difficult?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WATERS: And that's what they were funded under, right?

(Cross talking)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WATERS: I see the Log Cabin is funded; the Omegas are not funded at all, and the Omegas have been working with the kids.

MR. LELAND JOHNSON: We want it to be funded because we need this money to help and reach out and help people. I mean be realistic about it. We've got people in L.A. that need people

like us. You don't get there by, you know, the gang war. We need money. You know, we need to get out there. We want to get out there and help people. Like I was saying, some of us want to make this our jobs in life. Like myself, I want to make this my whole life.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Could the two gentlemen sitting behind you -- yeah, Mr. Marshall and Mister --

MR. PRESTON WORTHY: Worthy.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: -- Worthy. Let's assume, let's assume that the five of us sitting here had it within our powers to augment the budget and put more money in the budget, find some money somewhere. What would be a good starting figure with which to work? \$10,000, \$100,000, half a million, one million? Tell me. Throw a figure. And I'm serious. You see, this lady here, she sits on the Budget Committee. And I think you do. You do? You do. Both of them are sitting on the Budget Committee and I think the budget could not be clear without their policy, you see.

MR. MARSHALL: Let me try and take a quick overview ...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: I mean we're talking business now, serious.

MR. MARSHALL: I understand. What we do, we have a plan, okay? And our plan is to find young men, guys who we like, and take them, take them wherever they want to go. Okay. All of our young men so far have gone to college; every senior we've had has gone to college. Okay. So we have funds for that. Okay.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Excuse me. I like that but I like them to preach also. How do we do that?

MR. MARSHALL: Part of our plan is for them to do peer counseling so we can go into facilities and find other young men so we can take them on. I don't know what we spend now. We pay them whatever wages they would get.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: What?

MR. MARSHALL: \$12,000, \$16,000, \$20,000. I don't know. I'd have to figure it out. We do have proposals out that we can pay them to go in and do career counseling. And I've got to say this: We want to come to Los Angeles. I'm dead serious about that. I was raised in Los Angeles. And we were down there. I mean we've got young men down here that know about the Omega Boys Club who wear "I don't do drugs" shirts right in Watts and don't do drugs. So we want, if I can leave you with that, we want to come to Los Angeles to deal with the Crips and the Bloods. But money figure? \$20,000, \$30,000, I'm thinking, so that they can go out and do this ...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Just these four boys or many others?

MR. MARSHALL: (Cross talking) See, our thing is -- we've got a room full of guys who can do this. They can do this.

MR. WORTHY: Something else that we would like to, perhaps, as Mr. Marshall said, go down to Los Angeles and go to other cities.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Come to San Diego.

MR. WORTHY: We want to send these kids.

MR. MARSHALL: Send them to high schools, summer schools. That's where we got Andre

from.

MR. WORTHY: Send these kids down there to do a presentation. \$30,000, \$35,000, \$65,000 would probably be enough to get us started and to see the effects of this and then in a year's time, add some more so we can get in touch with these people because the money is a factor. But good hearts and good minds, that's the more important thing.

MR. MARSHALL: So you've got to understand, and it may sound corny. But we really are dedicated. You've got to understand we're out to save every one of these kids. I'm an assistant principal. I work all day. I have a wife and three kids. And this is what I do. And I never brag about the Club but I've got a chance to say this: We do want to save every kid. You've got to understand, we really do. We've got guys that want to do it. You know, this is what we do. And we can do it. We CAN do it. You know, we can do it. I believe deep within myself that we can make a difference and make inroads. But we haven't a chance. I don't know what everybody else is doing, but they're not making a dent in it -- into the gangs problem.

MR. JACQUA: I just want to say one thing, especially to Ms. Waters, who I admire very, very much.

You see, as we all know, because we're all friends in here, and this is, by the way, I really appreciate it. It's the first time that I've ever been in front of a group like this where I really like everybody I'm talking to. The thing is, like one of the answers to this problem, one of the answers is peer counseling. There are other answers: We need job training programs. You know, we need a lot of things: Family intervention. But one of the answers that works, because it's worked with us, because, you know, like, from what the earlier presentation is, is peer counseling. It works. And obviously, in order to promote this, not just with us but in Los Angeles, in San Diego, in Fresno, all over, is to start creating jobs.

I even go back to Mr. Elder who was talking about the creation of peer counseling jobs so young men will say, "Hey, not only do I get money in my pocket to survive, but I'm also somebody because I'm going out and tell it the way it is and saying yeah, there is hope, you know, I mean, you know, that we do all have dreams and we can, in actuality, make those dreams a reality."

So my thing here is to say I can't give you a figure because I have no idea of the enormity of the problem. I mean L.A., San Diego, blah, blah, blah. What I'm saying is some kind of a bill, which I know would be extremely difficult to convince a lot of people of, is to create jobs and maybe a peer counseling corps, which would be unique in America. And I'm saying in finality here: It works. It works. But most people, legislative people, are afraid to take a chance on it. But I guarantee that it works. And we're all friends here and I know you've got a lot of other adult legislators to convince. Any time you want, we're here to see that it works.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: I have a bill that I shared with Ms. Waters, that is, it would authorize a pilot program. We don't need the pilot program because you are the pilot program already.

But let me tell you what it says: A pilot program that would petition facilities in certain counties of their election to provide peer counseling. It has no money in it. I'm checking with Ms. Waters. And I read also -- and the document says that you people, Omega, have \$12,000 based on 20

peer counselors. You put approximately 2,400 hours at \$5 an hour. So it costs you \$12,000.

My question of Ms. Waters and my colleagues sitting here, supposing I would augment this bill to make it look broader, put \$100,000 in it. Will \$100,000 be somewhat helpful?

MR. WORTHY: Like we said, it would be helpful. It would be helpful. It would be a start and we would be very grateful. But I'd like to answer the question of Ms. Waters.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Please do.

MR. WORTHY: You mentioned about our saving kids and the continuation of doing this. Sometimes the kids are not ready in their hearts to make that change because it's not time for them to change, to have the discipline, responsibility, and self respect and care it takes. We won't forget about these kids. We don't forget about them. If one of these young men died, Jack Jacqua and Mr. Marshall would send someone after them. We do keep kids, that is right, as soon as we touch them because the tears, the frustration, the disappointment, is a challenge every day. So as to the \$100,000, yes, it is a gift, as addressed by the young men before us. But we don't lose any kids. If we do, it's because the kids lose themselves. We don't give up that fast because some kids don't want to be talked to. That doesn't mean we're going to forget about them.

SENATOR WATSON: Let me just ask you this ...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Go ahead, Senator.

SENATOR WATSON: I'm thinking, since we have such a territorial problem -- Maxine, you can verify this -- are you set up where the adults, as long as the young people can come down and train one to do one, to do what you do, so that when they are talking to someone, that someone that lives in their community is part of their set, but they have learned from you what to do and then you can train them? We have a city full of young black adults. They're organizing themselves, a hundred black men. We've got all the fraternities and so on but they don't know what you know.

Could you pass that on? If we were able to set up a program, are you ready to train others -- these young four, these four young men, would have to train others, like themselves -- to do what you do and do well? And are you set up to do that?

(Cross talking)

SENATOR WATSON: Okay. Well, if you're set up to do that, and we can get a commitment out of Dills -- you know, when he speaks, people listen -- we can get a commitment out of McCorquodale here -- I'm sorry Nielsen left and I'm sorry Elder's left -- and Ms. Waters here. You know, this will start a movement; and especially with the Chair of the Committee, we can start something going here.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Senator Watson, I'm tired of going to funerals in San Diego.

SENATOR WATSON: Tell me about it.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: I'm tired of going to funerals. (Applause)

MR. WORTHY: Let me say something to you. When we were in Sacramento, and we were at a church and the fellows -- these two gentlemen went with me to do a presentation to talk about the Club. And what we found ...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: Speak into the mike because this is recorded and we want ...

MR. WORTHY: And what we found out was that a lot of people want to help. They know there's a problem out there but they don't know what to do about it. And they are looking for people to come in, in churches and schools, to sit down and begin to discuss with them some of the problems they're having in the community and what they can do about it. These two young men, they really want the job, and you can describe to them what can be done...(tape turned over)...

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: I want to, unless you have any questions, I want to say that on behalf of the Committee, and any Member can speak for themselves, I am very much touched and moved, and I know the Committee is, by their sincere presentation. I am very impressed. And I know that the future of this country, if it were left to young men like you, it is secure and safe because now you have seen the difference between previous experience and the future.

You told us the story. It is our job to do the fighting on your behalf. I wish to God I could promise you that all is going to be hunky-dory in the Legislature. I can't promise you that, you understand that. I can promise you that with Assemblymember Maxine Waters sitting to my right, Senator Watson to my left, Senator McCorquodale, Senator Dills, and Senator Nielsen, it so happens that three of these Members here sit on the Appropriation Committee. Two Members -- are you on the Budget Committee? Two Members here sit on the Budget Committee. And in the last five years that I know -- no, six -- Assemblymember Maxine Waters sat on the Conference Committee on the budget. And in case you don't know this, we can vote anything we want to. But it takes six people to put our budget out. And Ms. Waters is one of the six votes, and I think that she is going to tell the Governor I ain't going to sign the budget until I get a couple of hundred thousand dollars or something. She is the only one that can make it stick. And so leave it up to us. We're going to fight on your behalf. I wish I can promise you that, yes, it's in the bag. I can't say that, but we'll do our best.

MR. MARSHALL: When they come back with that, I believe we actually have the answer to stop bloodshed. I mean, really. I want you to remember that when you progress through this.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: And I'm going to leave the last word to young Mr. Johnson, the last word; it's yours. And none of you can comment. He's going to finish this up -- the last word.

MR. LaMERLE JOHNSON: I just want to say thank you for giving us the opportunity to show you what we're all about, you know. You're nice and sincere too and we know we're sincere. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DEDDEH: All right. God bless you. (Applause)

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