



Gang Violence Assessment Hinds County, Mississippi

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PURPOSE

The Mississippi Office of the Attorney General asked BOTEK Analysis to provide a report on possible gangs operating in Hinds County, Mississippi. The objective of the project was to assess the state of youth and gang violence

primarily in the capital city of Jackson, and offer recommendations for further study or action. The gang violence assessment will contribute to a larger set of reports on crime prevention.

METHODS

From August 11-13, 2015 BOTEK and the Urban Peace Institute sent a team to Jackson to make observations and conduct a series of interviews with key community figures, public officials, and law enforcement personnel. We interviewed 25 people, both individually and in focus groups, to discuss their observations, opinions, and beliefs about gangs, youth violence, crime, and the local criminal justice system. Information obtained from these sources has not been confirmed as fact, but fact-finding was not

the goal. We set out to obtain a broad view of the socio-political dynamics of Jackson and the views of its citizens and law enforcement professionals. Throughout this paper, we quote and describe the observations and opinions of citizens, elected officials, and law enforcement professionals, but unless otherwise noted, we did not confirm the truth of assertions. This report is a preliminary step in what we hope will be a concerted effort to change the way Jackson approaches the problem of violent crime.

BACKGROUND

■ *“There’s a lot going on here, just read the history books.”*¹

The Jackson Metropolitan Area (Copiah, Hinds, Madison, Rankin, and Simpson counties) had a population 539,000 in 2010. About half of those people (245,000) live in Hinds County, the majority (170,000) in Jackson, with a racial breakdown of 80% African American and 18% Caucasian. Jackson was the site of considerable unrest and national attention during the civil rights era, and racial tension continues to be a major problem.² Residents of Jackson and

the state of Mississippi have worked hard to overcome their past. In 1994, the state convicted Byron De La Beckwith in the 1963 murder of civil rights activist Medgar Evers, and in 2005 the Jackson City Council re-named the local airport to honor Mr. Evers. African-Americans and Caucasians still suffer from the trauma of this era, with African-Americans questioning the extent of progress and Caucasians feeling that they bear an undeserved stigma from the past. Although perceptions differ as to whether gangs exist or play a role in crime, there is no question that Jackson and Hinds County have a serious problem with violent crime, including youth crime, which is blighting the area and brutalizing its citizens.

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1. All italicized quotations are statements made by the various interview subjects we encountered during the assessment.
 2. This paper does not examine the issue of race bias in crime control, but merely notes that racial issues frequently appear in public discussion of urban and governmental issues when compared to other cities.

I. YOUTH VIOLENCE AND THE QUESTION OF GANGS IN JACKSON

■ *"People should understand that a safer Jackson means a safer Metro area."*

In 2014, there were 61 homicides in the City of Jackson.³ As of August 2015, the number stood at 46. Many of the murders are drug-related.⁴ Interviewees disagree as to the existence of gangs in the city.⁵ Opinions range from: (a) yes, there are gangs operating here, (b) no, there are no gangs here, and (c) there are no gangs in the area, but there are groups that engage in the kind of hostilities associated with gang activity.⁶ A local official said that although public figures like the mayor and police chief deny the existence of gangs, judges and community corrections officers acknowledge their existence. This difference of opinion is reflected in the larger community. When we probed further in the interviews, we found that willful blindness might stem from a concern that labeling youth in the community as gang members could cause further reductions in already strained resources for young people or could attract overly-zealous attention from law enforcement. However, current research indicates that these labels are less important than an accurate assessment of crime patterns. Jackson has a bad problem

with multi-offending groups. The solution will emerge from further investigation into the identity of the offenders and the nature of the crimes being committed. The authors recently spoke with David Kennedy, Director of the National Network for Safe Communities and professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to verify the most recent research on this critical issue. Mr. Kennedy confirmed the falsity of the image of highly organized gang structure. Instead he said, even in communities with visible gang identification, the problem is better described as groups of young people committing violent crimes. Professor Kennedy's approach, the success of which has been confirmed in rigorous analysis, is to dig deeply into the street knowledge of police officers in order to develop a targeted enforcement strategy that extinguishes criminal activity. Similarly, the Urban Peace Initiative has developed successful interventions that focus on training community leaders, creating safe spaces and developing resources for youth within the worst neighborhoods. Both strategies are discussed below.

3. https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2014/crime-in-the-u.s.-2014/tables/table-8/table-8-by-state/Table_8_Offenses_Known_to_Law_Enforcement_by_Mississippi_by_City_2014.xls

4. Interview with local Jackson law enforcement official.

5. As will be made clear in this assessment, experts agree that the term "gang" is unimportant in addressing crime problems. We use the term colloquially, since we were asked to work on the question of gangs in Jackson, but we caution the reader not to infer that we have substantiated the existence of gangs. Instead, we propose strategies to remedy the crime problem.

6. "Group problem" was described as informally associated groups of individuals who engage in "beefing" and retaliation.

"Gang culture has changed. No one controls anyone anymore with little cliques all over the city."

Interview participants identified some gang names: the Gangster Disciples, Vice Lords, Simon City Royals, Men of Business, 500 Block, and 833 Gang, but many said that Jackson's "gangs" were better described as cliques, lacking an organized structure or leadership, let alone a national affiliation. We were told that members of various groups work together to

commit crimes and that rivalries or “beefing” with others occurs and may be drug-related or based on personal grievances. We heard a common theme that even “group” crimes are driven by individual needs: an “every man for himself” credo, which is inconsistent with the gang mentality, and that cliques may adopt names such as the Gangster Disciples or Vice Lords without any real connection.

Law enforcement personnel said that recruitment takes place in schools and in the local jail, adding that serious gang problems occur in the county jail because inmates are forced to affiliate in order to survive. In detention, staff are said to identify gang members by the number of slices on an eyebrow, position of a hat, or color of socks.

In 2011, the FBI released the National Gang Threat Assessment, which identified 17 gangs operating in the state of Mississippi.⁷ Our survey participants suggested gang ties between Jackson and Chicago, as well as Memphis and Little Rock. Several said that a gang-involved person from Chicago would visit relatives in Jackson for the summer and recruit new members or support the creation of Jackson-based cliques to enhance their network, which includes transporting guns from Mississippi. Virtually all interview subjects mentioned the ease with which guns may be acquired, even by children. The prevalence of gun ownership in Mississippi means that breaking into a parked car will often yield a weapon.

On the home front, it was argued that the decline of parental discipline of children was a significant factor in the rise of youth violence. Some noted that family dynamics including parent-child relationships are further strained by the lack of employment opportunities.

7. <https://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/2011-national-gang-threat-assessment>

DRUGS: THE DOPE BOYS

“Dope boys are mini-gods in these neighborhoods.”

Drugs are prevalent in Jackson, causing harm to buyers, sellers, and those around them. As one person said, they “devastate neighborhoods and get people locked up.” Many interview subjects claimed that in addition to providing ready income for young people, the cash generated by illicit drug sales sustains the local economy. Local and federal law enforcement agents told us that drugs are transported to Jackson via Houston and Memphis. Agents also identified suppliers as some of the larger drug cartels such as La Familia Michoacana, Sinaloa, New Generation, and Gulf Cartels. The major drugs of abuse were said to be marijuana, crack cocaine, and methamphetamine, but law enforcement agents report an increase in heroin sales along with a dangerous synthetic drug known as K2 or “Spice,” which is gaining popularity among youth.⁸

The assessment team was given a tour of Ward Three and an area colloquially referred to as Brown Bottom. The team observed many abandoned and dilapidated houses known as “bandos.” These structures create serious public safety risks since they can be used as centers for illegal activity, as well as treacherous playhouses for children. We were told that in many instances, heirs do not bother to claim a property after the death of the homeowner, a phenomenon attributed to lack of economic opportunity in the area as well as the devaluation of real estate. Essentially,

8. These chemical compounds are generally described as “synthetic cannabinoids,” but they differ widely and are often comprised of substances that are not illegal and will not be detected in urine drug tests, making them more attractive to persons subject to a regimen of drug testing.

people told us, there is no reason for family members to obtain the title and attempt to sell a house in this part of town. Although there are statutory processes for the city or state to take title of these structures and destroy them or render them safe, the volume of dilapidated buildings is overwhelming.

"These kids are tired. We have 14 and 15 year olds that look like they're 40 years old."

During the tour, the assessment team heard strong opinions about "dope boys," who are held to blame for flooding the communities with drugs. Driving through the neighborhood streets, we could see young men hanging out in the front yards of homes, which unlike the surrounding residences were completely remodeled and appeared to be centers of activity. These houses, law enforcement officials said, were purchased and maintained for the drug trade. Interview subjects informed us that the owner of one home uses the property flagrantly for drug dealing; he had cemented the entire backyard and had vehicles coming and going all night long. According to residents, abandoned homes may be purchased for as little as \$2,500 to \$5,000, making it affordable for gangs or groups to set up shop. One interviewee stated that "drug boys put mom and their kids on heroin" and force them to engage in prostitution once they are addicted. We also heard assertions that "dope boys" curry favor in the community in order to build support, for example, by handing out school supplies to children. It is believed that young people in these neighborhoods admire the dope boys and are lured into that lifestyle, aspiring to have money and cars.

LOCAL OPINIONS OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

"There is a sense of impunity in the criminal community. You know that if you're mad at someone you can go and kill them. There's a ninety percent chance you won't get convicted and you probably won't even go to court."

Residents and law enforcement agents concur that the City of Jackson is a safe haven for criminals, with some suggesting that the odds of evading a conviction after committing a crime are high.

Corruption and a sense of impunity worsen a crime problem in two ways. Obviously crime and escalated levels of influence by organized crime are fostered by a perception of weakness in the public institutions responsible for apprehending, convicting and punishing criminals, but for victims of crime, ineffective response from law enforcement can lead to hopelessness and bitterness, which may evolve into criminality. In relation to the criminal justice system, we heard the words "unfair," "not here when you need them," and "lack of process" from local individuals and officials in and out of the system.

The elected Hinds County District Attorney is seen by a number of our participants as ineffective and possibly corrupt. A couple of participants said the DA himself is not interested in prosecuting criminals because of his prior 20-year career as a criminal defense attorney, and that he most likely knows all the

criminals in the Jackson area. We heard rumors of campaign support from organized crime.⁹

Correctional facilities are roundly criticized. Participants told us that those released or paroled from prison are bused directly to downtown Jackson without a reintegration strategy, which strains resources and increases the incidence of violent crime. Assessment participants described “convict leasing scams” in which parolees are placed in halfway houses and required to work in state-supported programs, with wages being paid directly to the halfway house. The Hinds County Detention Center in Jackson currently houses 170 inmates with a reported 20% suffering from mental illness.¹⁰ Public records and discussions with Circuit Court judges confirm that inadequate resources are available for mentally ill inmates who are placed in the general population. The pace of criminal prosecutions is slow, and a pre-trial detainee may be held for an unreasonably long time awaiting trial if unable to post bail. This causes the county jail in some cases to serve as a prison, a function for which it is not equipped. Law enforcement officials and community leaders alike expressed frustration that individuals were in jail without any charges having been brought, positing that this makes the jails much more dangerous.¹¹ If jails are a breeding ground for gang involvement, minimizing the length of pre-trial detention should be a priority to ward off further reason for young men to affiliate.

9. For the purpose of this assessment, it does not matter whether there is corruption in the police department or the DA’s office. We report the information here because lack of public trust in these institutions is an important factor in the community’s sense of hopelessness.

10. Local Jackson law enforcement official.

11. Our research into caseload management indicates that Hinds County does not hold detainees longer than 90 days without indictment, but pre-trial detention may continue for an unreasonably long time due to a failure to bring the case to trial swiftly.

OPINIONS ON THE CAUSES OF INCREASED JUVENILE OFFENDING

“Parents will call Henley-Young [youth detention center] to take their kids so they can have the weekend off.”

Participants said that local schools are troubled by low morale and hopelessness with poor graduation rates. In 2014, Wingfield High graduated 48% of the class that entered four years earlier. Furthermore we heard that gang activity contributes to insecurity; affiliation rates in middle and high schools were estimated in the broad range from 10% to 70%. A great deal of blame for youth crime is assigned to parents, but school discipline is also a hot issue. Many people, including officials, cite the elimination of prayer and corporal punishment in schools and at home as a causal factor in juvenile delinquency, and told us that litigation by organizations like the Southern Poverty Law Center has fostered youth violence by “giving kids too many rights.” This residual sentiment is not surprising as the practice of corporal punishment in Mississippi is still more prevalent overall than anywhere else in the country. Sadly black students are 70 percent as likely to be struck as white students in Mississippi.¹²

We were told that parents actively seek a diagnosis of a mental health condition or a learning disability for their children because the required Individual Education Plan (IEP) amounts to a free pass from school discipline, and perhaps income of as much as \$636 a month in disability benefits for the family. It is rumored that children will admit a parent’s crime knowing that they will only have to serve a brief sentence in the juvenile facility. Youth

12. Startz, Dick (2015) Brookings, Schools, black children, and corporal punishment. <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/brown-center-chalkboard/posts/2016/01/14-schools-black-children-corporal-punishment-startz>

rehabilitative services are not widely available, or when they are, not well utilized in the county, which leaves a tremendous gap in resource utilization for young people.

Youth courts, like others in Hinds County, do not appear to receive proportionate support from the state. A single judge runs the Youth Court in Hinds County, while neighboring Rankin County, with a population 40% smaller and a much lower crime rate, has two judges. Assessment participants cited the need for family courts in Hinds County that could address the entire family structure in a uniform fashion.

Juvenile offenders in Hinds County are held at the Henley-Young Juvenile Justice Center. Detention is usually a maximum of three days for low-level offenses, but offenders may be held for ninety days on serious offenses. Neighboring counties will pay for beds to hold their juvenile offenders, which is a source of funding for Hinds County. Oakley Youth Development Center, run by the Mississippi Department of Human Services in nearby Raymond, can provide longer stays for juvenile offenders who need school as well as psychological and substance abuse treatment. At the time of our visit, Hinds County had sent just one juvenile to Oakley in a year.

OPINIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

"Law enforcement is underpaid, exhausted, and frustrated. You can make a good case but not get the DA to get an indictment. Good cops move to Rankin County or to Dallas."

The Jackson Police Department does not appear to have readily accessible quality data,

and there is some evidence of an institutional distrust of quantitative analysis. We were told that the JPD denies the existence of drug and gang problems even when confronted with evidence to the contrary. In 1999, a study by the Maple-Linder group recommended an increase of officers on the streets in order to address crime and violence issues. People have complained that not much was done with the study and recommendations were not implemented. Local papers reported that the chief of police at the time, who actively sought the study, called it irrelevant when it was issued. We were also told that police officers and detectives are poorly trained, morale is low, and reported crime and staffing statistics are deliberately inaccurate, even as to what should be a mundane issue such as department staffing. For example, sources in law enforcement said that while JPD reports having 489 police officers, only 240 are active, and the rest are on leave (military, sick, or temporary disability). In some precincts, they said, only 6 of the 13 assigned officers are active at any given time.

All police departments in communities with high crime rates face public criticism, but the Jackson Police Department incurs more than the usual. Our interview subjects believe that the department has been harmed by nepotism and a culture of corruption, with biased discipline and career advancement requiring patronage within a "good ol' boy" network. We heard that experienced officers who are not in the inner circle leave the department.

A high turnover rate is always a cause for concern in police departments, and if it is true that promotions are made on the basis of patronage or political influence, then it may also be true that the department is top heavy in rank, leading to fewer officers on the street and creating a fiscal burden with salary costs.

DATA COLLECTION

"You can't use the word gang in the press, because the money will leave."

The JPD has used COMSTAT in research and planning for at least a decade, but one survey participant questioned the competency of staff assigned to work there, particularly if their background was not in data analysis. One interviewee asked, "How do you turn a military man into an analyst?" It was reported that the City and County have problems producing statistics for the region, and the Mayor prevents any negative information from going public in order to protect urban investment. We also heard about a resistance to technology. As one person explained, the police department insists that statistics be refined by a "human element." If this is true then analysis is rendered useless. This is an important issue for any kind of targeted enforcement discussed below in the recommendation section, since the technique requires accurate information about crime.¹³ It is highly likely that adopting a "smart policing" model of any sort would require that the JPD obtain a better data collection and sharing system with trained personnel to oversee and report unadulterated results.

13. We verified that there are alternate means of assessing crime, however. If the state and local law enforcement agencies do not compile and maintain raw data with needed accuracy and specificity, targeted enforcement can occur on the basis of information gleaned from street cops. Nonetheless, smart policing is obviously in everyone's interest and priority should be given to creating a good data collection system in the Jackson Police Department.

MACE PROGRAM

The Metro Area Crime Elimination (MACE) program is a multi-agency task force composed of Hinds County Sheriff's Department, JPD, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Hinds County District Attorney's office, and local health agencies. The program is based on Project BRAVE in Baton Rouge, focusing on neighborhood-based policing through fostering relationships with residents and building cases on offenders in the area. The Sheriff's Department takes the lead on strengthening community relationships while JPD focuses on enforcement. A deputy sheriff who works the area expressed two major challenges: (a) lack of community resources, and (b) residents have developed learned helplessness to drugs and violence in the community.

During our tour of the MACE target area known as Brown Bottom, we encountered residents who took an active role in crime prevention and reporting. "I wish there were more people looking out like me," said an elderly woman. This respected long-time resident knew all of her neighbors, described the illicit activity in the immediate vicinity, and was not afraid to identify disruptive individuals. She and a few others like her in Brown Bottom were cooperative and did not oppose the concept of neighborhood organization to address violent crime. The MACE program was credited with decreasing crime in the area, but was set to end in December of 2015 as a result of administrative changes and a lack of funding.

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS

"Everything around you is violent. Your parents treat you violently, your teachers treat you violently, your neighbors treat you violently, even the stores treat you violently... It's not all physical; sometimes it's verbal. If you go into a store you're not treated as a customer, you're treated violently."

The economic infrastructure of Jackson has deteriorated to crisis level. Middle-class residents are leaving the city in record numbers, seeking opportunity and better public safety. An entire formerly thriving black businesses district in the city center is boarded up. Population loss will aggravate Jackson's problems.

African-American community members, including law enforcement personnel and public sector leaders, describe a sense of powerlessness and frustration with the current state of the city, and virtually every interview subject mentioned the entrenched culture of non-cooperation between agencies. Corruption is presumed, and many wish that the state would step in and fix it. Disempowerment appears to be endemic, as evidenced by the lack of faith in law enforcement and the broader criminal justice system. To be fair, law enforcement agencies are legendarily clannish and competitive, but it does not appear unreasonable to conclude that Hinds County is an extreme example. Even superficial media coverage describes fiefdoms ruled by elected leaders who appear to operate autonomously with little interest in serving the public interests of residents until an election looms.¹⁴ Residents expressed little confidence in the electoral process and perceive elected officials as ineffective

and possibly corrupt. Political organizing at the community level is scarce and although politics are actively discussed, political mobilization appears nascent and easily manipulated by the local media.

"The gun is a tool to get food or to get shoes or a car. If you need a ride across town, the bus isn't close so you take a car at gunpoint. If they resist, you shoot them."

Our assessment shows that Jackson is trapped in a vicious cycle. Many city residents are desperately poor and victimized by violent crime. Government fails to protect them, leading to bitterness and a perception that law enforcement is incompetent or indifferent. Children grow up with little opportunity and turn to crime. We heard the view that violence is necessary for self-protection and crime is the only means of supporting a family. In this cycle, crime, including violent crime, becomes the norm, and incarceration a routine part of life. Although strong families are firmly linked to good outcomes for children, the extent to which residents blame parents for the crime problem is troubling, suggesting that Jackson's residents do not view government as important enough to merit criticism.

Without assigning any blame, it may be said that Jackson's criminal justice system is not working. Recent years have seen a demand that new programs or expenditures be evidence based, i.e., have track records of success but few people point out the obvious: evidence may show that *current* policies and practices are ineffective. This is the case in Jackson. Policing methods have failed to control crime. Plainly we need a dramatic change to interrupt the cycle; it would be worth trying something new even in the absence of evidence. Fortunately BOTEC is able to suggest strategies, one primary and another complementary, both of which have demonstrated their effectiveness in this type of problem.

14. Again, these are not BOTEC's findings. The sentiment is worthy of inclusion because these beliefs, regardless of accuracy, will be a challenge to implementing a strategy for change.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS: TOPICS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DEVELOPMENT OF A PLAN

After a discussion of our preliminary observations, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), State of Mississippi asked for strategies and recommendations to form the basis for regional and statewide conversations about gang and youth violence initiatives. Fortunately, the evidence is clear that solving a youth violence problem does not require defining gangs or counting their members. The ability to stop groups of young people from committing violent crimes is solved with an unbiased examination of the data, followed by a strategy that incorporates the lessons from other communities while accepting whatever unique features are part of Jackson's problem.

BOTEC recommends consideration of targeted enforcement and dynamic concentration of policing resources, in a partnership with the National Network for Safe Communities, and supplemented with community-based violence prevention strategies with the Urban Peace Institute.

A. THE NATIONAL NETWORK FOR SAFE COMMUNITIES: TARGETED ENFORCEMENT AND DYNAMIC ENFORCEMENT, ERADICATING CRIME ONE SECTION AT A TIME

When crime rates overcome the ability of the police to work in conventional fashion, communities have achieved lower crime rates by concentrating resources onto a subset of the broader criminal population, in a manner that is self-sustaining without continuing investments of large amounts of police attention. The effort is called "targeted enforcement" because the police focus on a neighborhood or a particular type of crime, but the effort is "dynamic" in that

the concentrated effort is then redeployed in the next area until a broad effect is achieved. Careful planning and effort ensure that the targets are "tipped" into a self-sustaining low crime rate. When done properly, results are remarkable and have been confirmed by rigorous scientific analysis.¹⁵

At present, the criminals in Jackson have the upper hand by violating the law in such great numbers that individuals are relatively safe from prosecution, a phenomenon reflected in the sense of impunity reported to BOTEC researchers during interviews for the Capitol City Crime Prevention Study. The police are outnumbered. Targeted enforcement reverses that destructive force. As shown in one of the examples below, a targeted effort may flip the balance so that a single crime committed by a single individual brings punishment for the entire group.

High and low violation rates are both self-reinforcing. In the context of criminal behavior, the incidence of apprehension and punishment determine whether the behavior will recur. Targeted enforcement plans change the experience for law-breakers and reset the credibility of the police and prosecutors.

Adding enforcement and sanctions capacity at the very beginning tips a high-crime equilibrium into low-crime equilibrium. The nature of criminal groups, where communication and trust are well established, ensures that word of the new regime spreads quickly. However, despite our certainty that dynamic concentration could help Jackson,

15. Braga, A. A., & Weisburd, D. L. (2015). Focused deterrence and the prevention of violent gun injuries: practice, theoretical principles, and scientific evidence. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 36, 55-68.

we must reiterate the critical role of cooperation between agencies. These strategies do not work unless all the parts of the criminal justice system work together. Jackson will need temporary allotment of enforcement resources from state and/or federal agencies and everyone will have to work for the common good, putting aside ego and rivalries. David Kennedy's experience in Baltimore led to his somber realization that he knew how to change the behavior of the bad guys, but the program failed because he could not control the good guys.

Once a low-violation equilibrium is achieved, a new target may be chosen. Dynamic concentration makes a little punishment go a long way. In the case of Jackson, the initial concentrated effort could begin in a selected high crime area, perhaps Brown Bottom or Ward 3, and continue until the area is tipped into a low-violation equilibrium. At that point the additional concentrated resources can be redeployed to a neighboring area.

The following examples show how different cities chose a subsection of the crime problem (the most beleaguered neighborhood, the worst gang, or the most destructive crime) and by concentrating effort there, eradicated the chosen problem. When a neighborhood is restored, or a gang disarmed, the police are free to move onto the next target. The principle of inertia applies here. Once crime is eradicated in an area, it is slow to return, and peace may be maintained with far less effort than was originally needed.

All targeted enforcement strategies rely on data analysis to an extent that is unfamiliar to most law enforcement agencies. Instead of digging deeply into a single case with an eye to prosecution, targeted enforcement requires law enforcement to work with experts to be quite certain of who is doing what to whom, and where. If "beefing," or gang violence is determined to be the problem, researchers in the earliest phase must create a socio-gram—a

sketch of the relationships between gangs and individuals. This is easier than it seems at first blush, because a case is not being built for prosecution. It is enough that the cops on the street know what happened even if they cannot prove it.

Since this analysis has not yet been done in Jackson, BOTEC offers the following summary of targeted enforcement efforts in divergent communities facing different problems. The best-known early effort, called Operation Ceasefire, happened in Boston more than 20 years ago. Before the effort began in 1995, Boston had more than 70 homicides; 46 of the victims were gang-involved young men. In 1996, there were 26; in 1997, Ceasefire's first full calendar year, the number was 15.

Operation Ceasefire commenced with intense and detailed gathering of information by street cops, and then created a rolling enforcement model to extinguish gang violence. Police and prosecutors struck first and talked later:

We had to start somewhere; we had to pick a gang. In early 1996 the worst violence in Boston was coming out of the Vamp Hill Kings in Dorchester. The Kings were one of the city's most perennially, grindingly violent crews. ... Police officers served warrants and did street drug enforcement, swarmed the area to shut the drug market down, make the Kings broke. Probation and parole officers paid home visits, searched Kings' rooms for drugs and guns; they came back in the evening for curfew checks; called supervisees in for drug tests. DYS had four juvenile Kings under community supervision; they went out, picked them up, locked them up. One King was a resident alien with the wrong kind of criminal record; INS deported him... [A]ssistant DAs fast-tracked cases, raised bail requests,

*shopped cases to the U.S. attorney ... [whose office] took cases it would normally have kicked ... [The Boston Police Department] even brought in the MSPCA and had the Kings' pit bulls taken away. Sometimes BPD literally parked officers in front of the main players' houses. ... It took six weeks or so, but by May, the Kings had gotten it. The heat was too much; it wasn't worth it. Things were calm.*¹⁶

But the whole point of the effort is to be able to move on; it makes no sense to achieve peace if the concentrated effort had to be maintained on the same target. Once the goal had been reached, it was necessary to shift control from law enforcement to the gang members themselves. The experts made use of community supervision officers to work on the effort:

*We know who the gangs are; almost all the gangs have somebody on probation and parole at any given time; can we get probation and parole to bring them in for a meeting so we can talk to them? They can carry the message back to their crew... We'd pull in selected gang members, tell them that shooting was off-limits, that their whole gang would get attention if anybody put a body on the ground, offer them help and social services, come down hard if we had to. Make sure they got it and move on.*¹⁷

The next phase was a community meeting, and care was taken to present maximum credibility and impact. Representatives from all the law enforcement agencies and prosecutors attended to inform the gang members that they

were serious. A federal prosecutor addressed the crowd:

*'This kind of street crime used to be a local matter,' he said. 'Not anymore. Attorney General Janet Reno cares more about youth violence than almost anything else. My boss works for Janet Reno, so that's what he cares about more than anything else. Right now, the youth violence in Boston is happening in your neighborhood, which means that the U.S. Department of Justice cares about you. We can bring in the DEA, we can bring in the FBI, we can bring in the ATF; we can prosecute you federally, which means you go to Lompoc, not stateside, and there's no parole in the federal system anymore: You serve your time. We don't want to do that, and we won't if we don't have to, but it's violence that will get that kind of attention. ...'*¹⁸

The group made sure that the gang members knew exactly where they stood:

Here's how it's going to be in Boston from now on, the group said. When a gang kills someone, or shoots guns, or terrorizes the neighborhood, this group steps in. We'll focus on everyone in the gang. We'll arrest drug dealers and shut the markets down. We'll serve warrants. We'll call in probation and parole. Nobody's going to smoke a joint or drink in public, nobody's going to have any fun. We'll talk to the judges and make sure they know what's going on. We'll talk to your parents. It's up to you whether you get this attention. This group, no violence, no harm no foul. It's not a deal, it's a promise. Somebody else might come get

16. David Kennedy, *Don't Shoot: One Man, a Street Fellowship, and the End of Violence in Inner-City America*, p. 124, Bloomsbury (2011).

17. Ibid. at p. 119.

18. Ibid. at p. 129.

*you for dealing drugs, you take that chance. We go where the violence is.*¹⁹

Operation Ceasefire was an unqualified success in Boston. After putting the Vamp Hill Kings out of the killing business, the task force moved on to the next-most-violent gang, but by this time they had a powerful advantage. Word had spread. Law enforcement had credibility. Less effort was needed. Eventually notification sessions were held with all the gangs to disseminate the message: any gang that puts a body on the street would receive the same crushing treatment as had been afforded the Kings.

But this may not turn out to be what is needed in Jackson. Boston had organized gangs that were beefing with each other and catching innocents in the crossfire. Jackson might need a different solution; perhaps the approach that shut down the open-air drug markets in High Point, North Carolina and later in Providence, Rhode Island. Kennedy described the worst area in High Point in terms that echo some observations in Jackson:

*It swarmed with drug dealers, junkies, prostitutes. Parents wouldn't let their kids out to play. Hookers turned tricks in full view in the park. There were traffic jams of drive-through buyers during morning and evening commutes. Sunday mornings, there were so many johns curb-crawling that ... parishioners couldn't make the turn into the church parking lot for services. Robberies, burglaries, shootings, gunshots, car breaks, home invasions.*²⁰

Common sense will tell you that drugs per se are not the cause of crime-ridden neighborhoods. After all, drugs are imported, sold and used on college campuses all over the country

without gunplay and death, because dealers and customers keep it quiet. It is the open-air drug *markets* that ruin a neighborhood with intolerable violence. Conventional policing calls for buy-busts (when undercover officers buy drugs and then arrest the seller) and stakeouts, but as any cop will tell you, arresting and imprisoning dealers does no good; a line of hopefuls are waiting to take his place. To shut down the market, a different approach is needed. In High Point, researchers worked with law enforcement to ensure that nobody would want to buy or sell drugs in the target area.

Buyers from the suburbs were easily identified by license plate numbers, and the registered car owners got letters advising them that the car had been used to buy drugs. Police investigated and made cases against the worst dealers, but instead of issuing indictments, they convened a warning meeting. After introducing all the police and prosecutors in the state and federal systems, they explained their commitment to bring the full force of law on continued drug dealing, and then they showed the evidence to the dealers. Each dealer saw photographic and video evidence of drug sales made to undercover officers. The DEA took over the meeting and explained how each dealer could be connected to international drug traffickers, so that if the government chose, it could incarcerate them for 25 years in federal prison. But it was more effective to hold the threat. To the consternation of the dealers, the police had them over a barrel. If they wanted to stay out of jail, they could not return to business as usual. Word spread quickly that selling drugs in the designated neighborhood meant a quick trip to a long prison term. Once the dealers left the area, so did the prostitutes, the junkies who committed muggings and burglaries, and most importantly, the violent crews that robbed the dealers and stash houses, wreaking mayhem on innocent residents. It may be that Jackson could benefit from this type of an approach.

19. Ibid. at p. 131.

20. Ibid. at p. 310.

The kind of work that BOTECH offers Jackson includes a healing element, but it is not "hug-a-thug" sentimentality. Research into procedural justice, or "legitimacy," shows that community turnarounds are aided by a frank admission of past governmental failures. An early example of this happened by accident when a preacher addressed gang members in a warning meeting in Boston back in the 1990s:

*'We blew it, big-time, ten years ago,' she said to the locked-down kids. 'We're guilty, you're pissed. You're afraid to go home without a gun. But it's a new day. We're going to reinstitute the social contract. We're going to make the streets safe again. We're here to say two things. One is, we're sorry. But sorry is never enough. The second thing is, we're going to fix it.'*²¹

Supportive services (housing referrals, substance abuse treatment, employment) may be offered, but they should not be a special benefit for criminals. Ideally the service providers must make it clear that there is no free pass on continued criminality. The following are excerpts from the message delivered in North Carolina after law enforcement had said its piece:

[A community volunteer] 'I have never in my life heard tell of any law enforcement agency being aware of what you have done and calling you in to share what they have found you to be involved in, call you in and tell you, if you don't stop, what's going to happen. I've never heard of that before. So as was said at the outset, you have been given a golden opportunity, they have taken it upon themselves to call you in, to ask you to stop what you're doing. They are giving you an opportunity to turn your

life around, and certainly if we can assist you in doing that, then that's what we are willing to do, whatever that is. But you have been targeted. And yes, we are tired of it. And yes, if I have to point my finger, I have no problem in doing that.'

[A city councilor] 'Ladies and gentlemen, I just want to tell you, one way or the other, you're out of the drug business. Please take advantage of what's being offered to you. Because here in High Point, Winston-Salem, anywhere in this state, you're out of the drug business.'

*[The resource coordinator] 'I'll work with you. I want to, I hope you come forward. I'll meet you more than halfway. The last call-in we had, I think we had twenty-seven. I found twenty of them jobs, they are now working. We had eight that needed houses, and they have houses now. So we can find you housing. But you have to be willing to do your part. I will do my part.'*²²

Dynamic concentration will work in Jackson, but until we do the research, we cannot write the prescription for the targeted enforcement. If this project is to go forward, the following are the general steps that should be taken:

- 1) **Assess the likelihood of successful cooperation.** None of these strategies can work without wholehearted participation of the Jackson Police Department (and possibly the Sheriff's Department, depending on location), the Hinds County District Attorney, Parole and Probation, the FBI and U.S. Attorney's Office, and probably the DEA. We can assist with this process, but it will fall to the Attorney General's

21. Ibid. at p. 138.

22. Ibid. at p. 349-350.

Office to determine whether cooperation will actually be given. In failed efforts, the important agencies often gave initial lip service to the venture, but did not deliver. If this is to be the case, then efforts will fail.²³

- 2) **Ensure access to whatever data is available to create the socio-grams needed to drive the strategic planning.**

Experts will need unfettered access to police officers and records.

- 3) **Employ subject matter experts to work with the law enforcement officers in documenting the crime patterns in order to develop a joint approach.**

It is critical to understand that this may be a long process. Like many projects, targeted enforcement requires more time and money to plan than to execute.

- 4) **Execute the plan.** This may commence with a crackdown, as was done in Boston, followed by notification meetings and warnings, or it might begin with clandestine evidence-gathering as in High Point and Providence. More recent research shows that in some communities, depending on the nature of the crime sought to be extinguished, the effort may begin with meetings.

23. Egos and squabbling by the important agencies killed a targeted enforcement effort in Baltimore:

I might as well not have bothered. [After bringing together the mayor, the police department, the state's attorney's office, the U.S. attorney's office, probation, parole, ATF, the lieutenant governor, fourteen city, state, and federal agencies in all... I got word: the U.S. attorney had reached out and told all the federal agencies not to attend... It would be six months before we were ready to go operational, time spent rebuilding relationships and working out formal interagency understandings that had been handled through common sense and consensus everywhere else... we were pushing harder and harder, and we were hardly getting anywhere: Everybody hated everybody else. Id. at p. 228.

B. THE URBAN PEACE INSTITUTE'S PROGRAMS FOR GANG INTERVENTION

From our observations and the comments of law enforcement officers, Ward Three and Brown Bottom appear to have already been heavily damaged by crime committed by groups (possibly gangs) of young men and may be the appropriate sites for a supportive intervention of the type pioneered by the Urban Peace Initiative. In the South Side of Jackson, law enforcement can focus on an aspiring middle class in order to protect themselves from the expansion of gangs. In this area there are reportedly informal and formal community groupings that can be used as nexus points to strengthen the community against the incursion of the gangs.

A UPI assessment team might commence an intervention in two phases as outlined below. Implementation of these phases would start with assessment and mapping violent crime hotspots and eventually require leadership to develop a citywide vision and prevention infrastructure. There will also need to be investment in the development of a community organizing strategy that cultivates and empowers community leaders and violence interventionists.

Phase one recommendations can be accomplished with minimal resources and help to develop a foundation from which to build. During the assessment, a couple of respondents mentioned that barbershops were natural centers for organizing in the community. They could be used in the same way they were for AIDS education, only now to educate young men in the community on issues such as advocacy, community mobilization, and violence prevention. Outreach to the vulnerable age range of 12 to 24 will be essential in reaching the target population for youth prone to gang membership and violence. Community leaders such as barbers, youth sport coaches,

vocal parents, and youth advocates should be part of a strategy to begin the dialogue on crime and youth violence. These neighborhood relationships allow intervention specialists to react to escalating gang violence in real time as the threat is developing, and reach the next shooters and next victims before they become participants in a violent crime. This requires a special bond with the community and a measured distance from law enforcement. To allow this relationship to function effectively requires a respect and cooperation between law enforcement and gang interventionists.

For example, in the City of Fresno, the UPI began by hosting monthly meetings of seemingly disparate groups composed of law enforcement, church groups, former gang members, and service providers. From these meetings emerged a collaborative group that helped to shape a violence reduction strategy for the Southwest area of Fresno.

Leadership and stakeholder collaborative trainings can be conducted to invest in group capacity building. Inviting disparate groups together to discuss the potential for coordination of services is an essential first step to addressing community violence. The goal is to link public sector and community groups to begin discussing the possibilities to build momentum toward implementing a targeted strategy.

Phase One: Laying the Groundwork

- 1) Create a state authority on community violence to convene separate meetings with community stakeholders and public sector officials and establish buy-in to the process;
- 2) Collect data for analysis via meetings and focus groups with community and public sector leaders;
- 3) Identify key community leaders and change agents within law enforcement and other agencies;

- 4) Hold consistent meetings with these individuals/groups to develop a vision and strategy for target areas;
- 5) Develop agreements across sectors about the mission and goal of the strategy and garner commitment from each participating stakeholder to execute their roles and responsibilities;
- 6) Identify two to three target areas that are most impacted and implement a coordinated project supported by key stakeholders.

Phase Two: Building an Infrastructure

The UPI assessment team would include the development of a Comprehensive Violence Reduction Strategy (CVRS) to begin addressing youth violence and gangs. Facets of the CVRS include investment in prevention, intervention, reentry, and targeted suppression while ensuring data-driven policy making, service coordination, and equity of resources. Initial funding streams will need to be identified to launch the development and implementation process.

A power analysis would be conducted that identifies key leaders at the state, county, and city level to begin building the political will to address the issues. An executive-level table should be built to convene key leaders from each sector such as law enforcement, courts, attorney general's office, public agencies, and community leaders to spearhead the development of a strategy. Some elements for this table to consider include:

- 1) Mapping existing prevention, intervention and re-entry resources, and assessing the cultural competency of those services;
- 2) Mapping gaps in the system such as data collection and analysis capacity;
- 3) Creating an accountability structure to implement a CVRS strategy;

- 4) Incorporating best practices and research into the strategy;
- 5) Evaluation.

Tailored training for community stakeholders, public sector leaders, and law enforcement to increase multi-sector collaboration would be necessary as well. Additionally, the court system needs to develop youth-specific resources to address issues they face and offer programs to serve the 30,000 youth in Jackson. Consistent and rehabilitative services offered by the city and/or county can have a positive impact on violence provided that they are developed in a culturally competent and community-specific way.

UPI contributors designed the Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) program in Los Angeles. It is one successful example of a CVRS strategy. GRYD is a multiyear street gang crime and violence reduction initiative managed by the Los Angeles Mayor's Office with three core program components: 1) Inhibiting gang-joining through the provision of prevention services to youth ages 10–15 who are not already gang members; 2) Providing services to gang members ages 14–25 to assist leaving the gang life; and 3) Engaging in immediate reaction to gang conflicts and other street level incidents as they arise and conducting ongoing peacekeeping activities in gang communities to help keep retaliations and flare-ups under control. A year-one evaluation of GRYD participants examining the program's effect on risk factors for youth gang initiation found statistically-significant reductions in antisocial tendencies; parental supervision; impulsive risk taking; neutralization; negative peer influence; and peer delinquency.²⁴

24. Dunworth, Terence et al. (2010). Evaluation of Los Angeles Gang Reduction and Youth Development Program: Final Y1 Report. Urban Institute Justice Policy Center. Retrieved from: <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/412251-Evaluation-of-the-Los-Angeles-Gang-Reduction-and-Youth-Development-Program-Final-Y-Report.PDF>

Another UPI program in Los Angeles that uses a CVRS strategy—the Community Safety Partnership—is a proactive collaboration between community leaders in South Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) where officers patrol housing developments on foot, building relationships and getting on a first-name basis with residents. Officers engage with the community beyond patrols and arrests, and the homicide results are staggering: among the three housing projects where the Partnership was implemented, there were 43 homicides between 2005 and August 2011 — the month the Partnership began. There has been just one homicide since. And according to the LAPD, since 2010, violent crime is down 57 percent in the Imperial Courts housing project, 54 percent in Jordan Downs, and 38 percent in Nickerson Gardens.²⁵ More detailed analysis of these figures by the Urban Peace Institute and Harder+Company (an independent research organization) showed that even when controlling for other factors that influence crime, there was significantly less violent crime in CVRS housing projects than similar, non-CVRS housing projects.²⁶

Finally UPI would help to architect programs similar to Summer Night Lights as utilized to cool down dozens of formerly violent neighborhoods in Los Angeles. This park-centered effort concentrates activity and resources in the most criminally active neighborhoods in the city. Public private partnerships help to support, publicize and fund these regular public and free events that attract a multi-generation attendance and revitalizes surrounding neighborhood, dropping violent crime sometimes dramatically in these areas. A relatively small investment in food, music, sports and games brings children

25. Siegler, Kirk. (2013). After Years of Violence, L.A.'s Watts See Crime Subside. Retrieved from: <http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/07/25/205198028/Once-Crime-Ridden-South-L-A-s-Watts-Sees-Violence-Drop>

26. Jannetta, Jesse (2014). Assessment of the Los Angeles Community Safety Partnership. Urban Peace Initiative.

and elders out with teens and parents. Gang members participate without fear of being arrested on warrants. Local authorities give participants temporary amnesty at the events, which allow disparate groups to connect in a common safe haven. Summer Night Lights (and its successor in Los Angeles, Parks After

Dark) have been widely lauded and imitated. In 2014, Parks After Dark won California's "Health Equity Award for a Large County Practice" for its violence reduction effects,²⁸ and an analysis of similar programs by the Journal of American Medical Association found Summer Night Lights-type programs were effective means of both reducing violence and increasing community health.²⁸

27. Iton, Anthony. "California Endowment." California Public Health Departments Leading the Way in Innovative Work To Achieve Health Equity. December 8, 2014. Accessed January 15, 2016. <http://tcenews.calendow.org/blog/california-public-health-departments-leading-the-way-in-innovative-work-to-achieve-health-equity>

28. Jacob JA. Exercise and Gardening Programs as Tools to Reduce Community Violence. JAMA. 2015; 314(14):1435-1437. doi:10.1001/jama.2015.9002

CONCLUSION

The Gang Assessment performed by BOTECH and the Urban Peace Initiative has given us a broad-stroke outline of Jackson's youth crime problem. BOTECH recommends working toward a precise understanding of the situation before

embarking on a solution. Regardless of the ultimate choice, the experience of other cities is powerful and hopeful evidence that Jackson can develop a strategy to reclaim safety for its residents.