

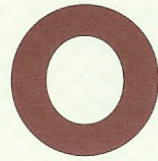
FoRuM

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GANGS AND YOUTH VIOLENCE



INSTITUTE OF POLITICS
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH



n May 20, 1994, the Institute of Politics convened a forum of elected and appointed officials, community leaders, and academics on the issue of gangs and youth violence. By bringing together a variety of perspectives and recording the richness of the discussion, we have worked to identify critical issues and public policy responses.

The elected officials who participated were **Robert Colville**, district attorney, Allegheny County; **Tom Murphy**, mayor, City of Pittsburgh; **William Robinson**, member, Pennsylvania House of Representatives. **Fredrick Thieman**, United States attorney of Western Pennsylvania, was the only appointed official. **Bernard Jones** of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development and Urban Youth Action and **Carl Redwood** from the Hill House represented the community perspective, while **Phyllis Coontz** of the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs contributed the academic perspective. **Mark Nordenberg**, acting provost, University of Pittsburgh, moderated the session.

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MN Not too many years ago, I think that a Pittsburgher reading an article, about serious violence committed by kids, might possibly have two companion reactions. A first reaction might have been the kind of human fascination that is difficult to explain but that we all know, relating to danger or evil at a distance. The other probably would have been a deep sense of relief that the reader lived in Southwestern Pennsylvania where this type of thing did not happen or at least didn't happen very frequently. But, to some extent, the times appear to have changed.

My reference materials for today consist of old issues of the *Post Gazette*. In thumbing through the local newspaper over the course of the last several weeks, I found the following kinds of stories:

- The story of a 14-year-old boy who shot a bicycle police officer in the mouth and who was killed when the officer returned fire.
- An article chronicling the once deadly retribution visited upon junior high school age bullies today.
- A feature article which involved a shooting on a school bus and a stabbing at a school bus stop.
- Articles reporting on the confiscation of a 9mm machine pistol at one local high school, and what was described as a racial brawl at another.
- An article describing what was apparently a gang-related shooting of an innocent bystander at an institution considered more important than a high school; that is, a shopping mall.
- And a good news story of a police officer whose life was spared when the gun pointed at him by a suspected 16-year-old drug suspect misfired.

My bet would be that average people reading accounts like these would get scared.

I would like to ask Mayor Murphy, known as a hands-on leader who has gone door-to-door

and who holds neighborhood meetings: To what extent are Southwestern Pennsylvanians concerned with violence today?

TM It's clear that it's a major topic of conversation. It's an issue that we all need to face. I believe that the media coverage of this, for the large part, has been irresponsible. That is not to say that there isn't a problem; the problem is well documented. But, media coverage has caused many people to be afraid when they see two or three young black men walking down the street, and to assume that they are gang members.

It's the sense that the media gives of the randomness of crime that is of particular concern to people and yet the documentation refutes that completely. The vast majority of violent crimes are not random. They involve relationships between individuals.

MN This perhaps is a good place to start, because the media can either be grounded in fact, or the product of misperceptions.

Let me just go to you first, Bob, then to you, Bill, because of your many years in law enforcement: Has there been a dramatic upswing in youth violence?

BC There has been a dramatic upswing of violence, in one specific area—there has been a substantial number of shootings in which young men have lost their lives. The 1991-1993 statistics show this to be clear.

A large portion of this violence was initially created by drug trafficking, and turf wars to determine territories. From that it spawned out into gangs. This was initially organized by certain adult individuals who co-opted kids into gangs and supplied them with the kind of weaponry we have not seen in the past. The proliferation of the initial organizing, and the sort of macho effect that takes hold of people who carry those weapons has worked its way down to our kids.

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The largest gang is the group of kids who come home from school and stay in the house because they fear going out.

Carl Redwood

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Most of the weapons that the police are running into are not the 9 mm or assault weapons, but are of the “Saturday Night Special” variety. They are, of course, just as deadly when used on somebody at point-blank range. And, again, it is not random, but for territory/turf. For example, the Bloods and Crypts in Garfield have been at each other for a time now, in the East End, and that’s where the most violence has occurred. Wilkesburg also has a lot violence as drug trafficking has been pushed out of the city of Pittsburgh into that area.

MN So you both [Murphy & Colville] would say, then, that the impression of random violence is more the product of media coverage than a changing pattern?

BC Yes. But you can’t totally fault the media, because when there are random acts of violence, it’s an extraordinary event and the media, of course, come at it with everything.

MN Representative Robinson, would you like to say something?

BR I noticed, Mark, when you were identifying news sources, you only mentioned certain sources. I agree that in many instances the media have not been helpful in solving the overall problems. But, I’m not quite sure that they have a vested interest in helping to solve it. I think they have a vested interest in something else, which is very natural. But other sources that are available, like Urban American Radio Network or the *Pittsburgh Courier* are different—there is some kind of twist or turn and they have a different perspective. Perspective with regard to performance is important.

Performance is what actually results from such coverage. This is clear when we start dealing with this whole issue of the police in any community. Probably anybody would agree that any time you put more police, more surveillance in any community, it

retards growth. You may suppress violence; you may control the people, but you will also kill growth.

MN Well again, just to be sure that we are all clear, what everyone seems to be saying is that a complete, totally accurate picture can’t be drawn from the popular media. But, nonetheless, there is increasing violence among youth.

Carl, why do kids join gangs?

CR First of all, I think most kids don’t join gangs, and I would like to answer the opposite question, “why kids don’t join gangs.”

Partially it’s because of fear. What tends to happen is that people outside of gangs watch gang members over time (and there are different kinds of so-called gangs). And they see that many gang members wind up dead, in jail, or doing nothing. And it really isn’t as good as they thought it would be.

Those who join gangs, I think join for different reasons, like a sense of organization and of belonging. For some types of drug-related gangs it’s for economic reasons—like we would apply for a job they join gangs.

Probably there are two types of gangs; the direct drug selling gangs, and those that do not sell drugs. Like a group in the Hill District that started wearing plaid coats. I don’t know why they wear plaid coats. Some of them may sell drugs, but not all of them. The main reason they came together was because they hung out together. Young kids have been hanging out in neighborhoods, all over, for ever. But groups of kids are not considered gangs in every neighborhood. But, the majority of kids do not join gangs.

MN Well it’s interesting that you say that young people don’t join gangs because of fear. Because one of the stereotypes advanced in the media is that kids join because of fear.

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Let me say this, there isn’t a national leader; there’s not the CEO of the Crypts or the Bloods, because that’s not a feature of gangs.

Phyllis Coontz

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CR The largest gang is the group of kids who come home from school and stay in the house because they fear going out.

MN Phyllis, do you have some thoughts on kids and gangs?

PC Well, I do have some thoughts, and I think that one point that needs to be made, and I think Carl begins to address this—we need to differentiate between youth gangs and groups of young people. Gangs have very distinctive characteristics and some which include the following sorts of things:

- Territory is very important—gangs form and have a vested interest in laying a claim to a certain territory.
- Gangs will defend that territory—to death—from intrusions.
- Lethal violence is a norm among gangs and that distinguishes violent gangs from cliques, hate groups, or other groups of young people.

Gangs have existed in this country, historically, since records were first kept on delinquency. The gang phenomenon is not new. What is new, I think, and probably what the media is responding to is the “nationalization” of gangs. Gangs are no longer confined to the big cities, but they are found everywhere. You have the Crypts and the Bloods, all over the country.

TM I disagree with you there. I don’t know of any strong evidence that indicates a national affiliation between the gangs here in Pittsburgh and a national group.

PC Let me say this, there isn’t a national leader; there’s not the CEO of the Crypts or the Bloods, because that’s not a feature of gangs. Gangs have a very fluid structure, informal leadership. But you can go to every major city across this country and you find gangs calling themselves Crypts or Bloods. They distinguish themselves by their colors. Bloods are

red and Crypts are blue—that’s the same—San Diego, Denver, Los Angeles, New York.

TM But do you believe there is some relationship among all those groups, other than their names and their colors?

PC Yes, I would say there are some distinguishing characteristics. Some gangs are distinguished along ethnic or racial lines, some by the activities in which they are involved, and some by their reputations.

TM I believe that any national influences on the groups in Pittsburgh are superficial factors such as name and color of clothes. It is misleading to suggest that there is a national organization with a leader. I just don’t see it, and I don’t think it’s the case in Pittsburgh.

PC Research shows that drug distribution is national and even international. There is in place an infrastructure for distribution from one region to another. Gangs are an integral part of that.

MN Fred Thieman, would you like to jump in here?

FT I understand Phyllis’s point that, certainly if you look at any major city you’ll see identifiable groups of individuals—Crypts, Bloods, and whoever, who copycat each other perhaps. But, at least to date, we see no indication of connection between those groups and gangs in Pittsburgh. To say that drug distribution is both a national and international problem is correct, but we see no clear-cut hierarchy within these gang organizations, in Pittsburgh, nor do we see any linkage among these local groups and gangs nationwide.

MN If I could pick up on that and go back to the point that Carl made earlier—that is, gangs being groups that exist for different reasons and take different forms, sug-

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Phyllis Coontz

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gesting that some groups that we call gangs actually do have redeeming social benefits to them. And that begs the question, how we ought to deal with gangs. Maybe I ought to put this to you, Bernie. What do you think the posture of the government ought to be with respect to these groups, what they are, and what they might become?

BJ I think the problem is that we are the problem. All of us sitting here at this table, and all of us who work at the power organizations, for the simple fact that we look at the gangs, and not at young people *period*. We make the so-called gangs powerful.

I was in a gang. I was in a gang called the Boy Scouts, a gang called Fifth Avenue High School Football Team.

We emphasize the problem, because we have pacified the problem for so long. The problem is that we are not dealing with young people. What kind of programs do we have in the community to help these young people? We have programs, but the program may have needed \$10 million, but we gave them \$50,000.

United Way and some of the other agencies made a study of the Hill District back in the 1950s. What did they do? They closed Hill City, they closed other programs, they moved the YWCA out of the community, and they closed other kinds of agencies. We tried to warn the city of Pittsburgh—that you are burying a problem. They ignored us. Businesses closed up or moved out of the Hill District. The transportation system was changed to be inaccessible. Single homes with single families started to have two and three families in them. What did we do? We sat back and said that's not our problem—that's the black people's problem.

Just a few months ago a major foundation in Pittsburgh, the Heinz Foundation, gave \$20 million to the Pittsburgh Symphony. Another foundation gave \$10 million. Now let's look at NEED, the

Negro Education Emergency Drive (NEED). One of the most solid educational programs around Pittsburgh, and the country. Here's a program that deals with America's education. Yet the top officers who help get funds for NEED get small funding for one of the greatest organizations in the world.

If you go and drive through the Hill District or other communities, there's nothing there for the young people. The businesses downtown are complaining because the black youth are hanging out downtown. Hell yeah, they are hanging out downtown—they have no place to hang out in their community.

The violence has increased because we do not have activities and support *for people*. It's not just the gangs. We do not support that five-year-old kid, that two-year-old kid. We don't support that mother who is carrying that kid in her belly. But when they start tearing up a little bit, shooting up a little bit, then we start saying we need to do something about the gang problem. No! Let's do something for our young people from prebirth, all the way through. We have to do something about our youth problems.

We cannot ignore the City of Pittsburgh's poor sections, especially our African-American sections any longer. When we stop doing that we'll solve the problem.

MN Well, here we have a mayor, who is known for being fair.

BJ People want to know what the mayor is going to do about this. I said, "I don't know, he's only been in office three months. You can't blame him. I'm going to give him a few more months." It's true, politician after politician has been playing games. The Hill House should not have to go out begging for money.

What about the University of Pittsburgh or other large institutions? One of our biggest problems in the City of Pittsburgh is

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Hell yeah, they are hanging out downtown—they have no place to hang out in their community.

Bernard Jones

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If you want to lose the war on drugs, let law enforcement alone carry it out.

Fredrick Thieman

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Bernard Jones



the United Way. Some of our review committees are pitiful. We permit them to come into these agencies and cut money from agencies that have been poor from the beginning. But we permit the United Way Review Committee to blame the small, under-funded agencies. Many of these agencies are going downhill day after day.

TM I think that the things that we have looked at support Bernie's contention. Take for example something as simple as permits for Little League fields. We want to dramatically expand Little League opportunities. When we examined the permits that we hand out we found that most of the permits for the City of Pittsburgh go to suburban adult leagues. City residents and Little Leagues can't get access to them.

I think the other thing that we have underestimated, particularly in this region, is the impact of the loss of steel industry. Thousands of people had an opportunity with little education to make a decent living. We lost 150,000 jobs in a six- or seven-year period in this region. What I now see, particularly in low-income communities, is that people are not connected in a sort of informal way to job opportunities, so they are left outside of the job market.

What we see when we go over to the Hill District, or to the North Side, is 30-year olds hanging out on the corners. They are the older brothers or fathers of the kids who are now into violence. They are much more passive about their situation than their younger brothers or sons. Young people involved in gangs don't see any future.

We spend millions of dollars on well-intentioned programs that ultimately don't lead to a job. People need to know that they can get a job, and that involves a very difficult solution. We need to restructure many of the existing programs that we do have and we need to get corporations in this city involved in a very different

way so that there is a job at the end.

MN Well, it seems to me that as the conversation moves in this direction, what we need to talk about is what we can do for 15-year olds, five-year olds, and kids who are not yet born, in providing some tangible source of hope.

TM Well, I think there is an immediate problem. I think that the immediate problem is to deal with the issue of violence. It's clear that there is a certain urgency about it. A good analogy is found in the urgency associated with addiction, which is often a confounding problem. For example, if an addict decides that he or she wants treatment, he or she needs to be provided with treatment today, now! You can not ask them to come back in three or four months when there is room to accommodate them.

I think that prevention programs, for example those targeting young moms, are also a critical piece of this. There is a certain urgency because no matter what else we do to make this city work, if people don't have a sense of safety, it doesn't matter.

BC I would agree that there are two levels—the one that Bernie talked about, our failure to have done things when we should have done them—and the trends that are emerging right now, which are public safety problems. There are two distinct problems occurring which have both long- and short-range issues.

I try to tell people, no matter how good we get at making arrests or prosecution, the problem that Bernie addressed is continuously there. If community needs are not addressed, more kids will come up faster than we can handle. An area where this is occurring, with the speed of light, is in public housing, and the mayor is addressing that right now. (But we also have to look at the fact that we have county-wide public housing.)

TM The city has more public housing than Los Angeles, and one of the largest public housing communities in the country.

BC Once you take the most economically and socially deprived individuals and pack them into housing conditions like this and put them on the welfare system—it's a miracle that we don't have 100,000 more criminal problems than we already do.

As Carl pointed out, the vast majority of kids don't join gangs. We have approximately 2,500 young people involved in hard gang activity. Three hundred to 500 are involved in the violent aspects of it, or are prepared to do the violent acts. We see that growing; and if you don't stop the source, it's going to grow.

MN Fred, from your perspective what has to be done in the short term?

FT I would say in the short term, on the law enforcement side, we are probably as efficient as we're going to become, with the exception of the juvenile system. The criminal justice system was unprepared for the increasing number of younger people moving into the criminal system and into the juvenile court system in particular.

In the short term, I believe that there is a serious need to rethink the entire juvenile court system. We need to get more money into that system. We need to make more arrangements to house violent kids as well as get the worst, more violent kids, which I refer to as "moral flatliners" off the streets.

Then we have to immediately pay attention to addressing the youth who are still reachable and reduce the flow of kids into the system. The ugly reality is that there is a spigot open in the basement and we have sent in troops to mop up the basement, for too long, and we are running out of places to wring the mops. We need to start shutting off the spigot by

creating long-term, prevention-oriented solutions.

MN Let's talk now about some of the more long-term solutions and start with our friend from Harrisburg, Representative Robinson. People have talked about jobs, training, and housing. What are the most important things that could be done, to turn off the spigot?

BR I think that we have to shape a new kind of public policy as it relates to corrections. While on one hand, we recognize what Bernie says is true, there is this urgency to gain peace. And I think it's peace at any cost. The cost is going to fall on the heads of the people Bernie talked about, and I think that's acceptable. Public policy accepts that. It's okay if those folks come up short. It's okay if they wait. They've been waiting.

Our public policy, unfortunately, appears to be driven by this need to deal with the violence and the need to incarcerate people. Our incarceration rate now in the United States is higher than it is in South Africa. So we are very efficient in locking them up.

And I think the money Fred and Bob might like to see going into the facilities to take care of the people they have to prosecute is going to be there, because public policy is going in that direction.

We have made a long-term commitment in the state of Pennsylvania to build prisons.

PC \$1.3 billion.

BR Right, this is on line. We already know that the recidivism rate is at 66 percent. We already know that 25 percent of those people already in prison can be worked with and the others are coming back. In the last two years the corrections budget has grown by 50 percent and the overall state budget has only grown by 5 percent. People like myself and Tom here, from the legislature, supported that.

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We spend millions of dollars on well-intended programs that ultimately don't lead to a job.

Tom Murphy

Our incarceration rate now in the United States is higher than it is in South Africa. So we are very efficient in locking them up.

Bill Robinson

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Our crime numbers, generally speaking, are lower than the rest of the country.

Fredrick Thieman

No matter what else we do to make this city work, if people don't have a sense of safety, it doesn't matter.

Tom Murphy



I believe that one thing we need to do is stop building prisons. Because if we stop building prisons, Bob and Fred will have no place to put people, then Bob and Fred are going to have to come up with another idea. Once money is driven away from the prisons, away from the police, it will have to be put somewhere else.

I know Bob will disagree with me on this, but if we took 25 percent of the drug confiscation money that now goes to our police department and district attorneys and invest it in the communities where the problem is found, we would dramatically reduce the problems that young people have, because we could create some opportunities and the mayor would not have to argue with city council over a measly \$200,000 (that's an embarrassment).

We need big money, real big money, and the only place in the state where you can get this kind of money is in the corrections budget and the welfare system. The welfare system has a ton of cash money and it's being given to people who many of us would consider loafers. Take those millions of dollars and drive the money in another direction. We need to have significant welfare reform just around the money. We got to find a way to control the costs in welfare system, now, and we ought to develop policies that make people productive.

Personally I am opposed to the welfare system, in total. I'm opposed, because the program is not productive enough. I would like everyone in my district to get off welfare and get some of that \$20 million that went to the symphony. They got it; they don't need it. Give those people the \$20 million. Tell them to get the hell off welfare. We'll set up a welfare fund, and everybody in the 19th legislative district will get some of the money. Now people say that's crazy, because the people who have the money are not going to give it up.

We have to have a public policy that is geared toward making sure

people are productive. I am for a capitalist system.

TM The bottom line is jobs. We need to create jobs. We spend enormous amounts of money around the edges—training people, maintaining people on welfare as Bill said.

We are in the process of taking inventory of youth programs throughout the city. How much money do you think is being spent in the East End—Garfield, East Liberty, East Hills and Homewood—on youth programs? Fifteen million dollars. Fifteen million dollars. We could put a lot of kids to work with that. I mean we're struggling to create 1,000 jobs for kids this summer and there are no after school programs anywhere in the city. It's a shame. You could walk up to 100 young men anywhere, Federal Street on the North Side or anywhere, and I think 90 of them would walk away with you if you could say to them, "Come with me and I'll give you a job." It breaks my heart that we can't do that.

BR Let me give you a twist on that. A black man came up to me today and said, "Right around the corner all these white guys are working and there's not a black man on the job." I said, "I know." He said, "I went around and asked the man who was running the job if I could work. The man said, 'Can you lay pipe?' I told him, 'I have no skill, but what those men are doing, I can do.' The man said he could not hire." He asked me, "How can we have all these people working in our community and all these other guys standing around?" He then said, "Me. I've been in trouble. I've been in jail. But if someone would give me a job, I'd go to work every day and I'd be productive."

What I can't understand is how community groups and organizations can be so insensitive as not to sit down with the mayor and others and say: "Before we redevelop this neighborhood, could we make sure that we cover all the

issues, one of which is hiring minorities?" What we have been creating here and what we will call it is "domestic apartheid."

BC I just wanted to add, informationally, you may not be aware, Bill, the estimates that you may have of what we forfeited may be extremely high.

The other thing that you mentioned, the district attorneys of the state of Pennsylvania are adamantly opposed to the "three strikes and you're out" proposal. I have been adamantly opposed for 20-some years against mandatory sentencing. I testified in 1980 that, if you put mandatory drug sentencing in, that we would fill your jails—and we did fill the jails. So I will say that, if the state goes with mandatories, you will fill the prisons. The one the county has built will get filled the day after they open the doors. If you impose mandatory sentencing and don't take drug and alcohol treatment seriously, and put programs in the jail, and outside the jail, and give people the opportunity to change their lives, they will fall back into the same repetitive patterns they were in.

MN We have now gone through a decade where the solution to almost every problem has been to get tougher. I wonder whether we're seeing the beginnings of change.

TM I think that the average person out there is prepared to give up his or her civil rights and break the Bill of Rights to deal with the issue of crime. I think people simply do not want to feel fear, and they are prepared to give the police whatever power they need to have to deal with the issue. I don't agree with that, but that's the going attitude out there.

When I talk about trying to raise money to give kids an opportunity to get jobs, I get criticized up and down in editorials in the paper. The majority of legislators in this state live in suburban areas. In Allegheny County for example,

20 out of 25 live in the suburbs. So it is extraordinarily difficult to get the resources that you need away from the short-term solution of building prisons, to the long-term solution of creating jobs in the current atmosphere.

CR I have a couple of points, one of the long-term items has to do with the jobs issue. The problem is that we have accepted a high level of unemployment as being normal (around 6 percent). In particular, we have accepted a very high level of unemployment for African-American men and people who are concentrated in places like public housing, (where the unemployment rate is like 40-50 percent).

The attitude, that it's okay to have this number of people out of work and even that it's necessary in order to keep wages down, is a real problem.

Another issue involved here is that 28 percent of the young people in this city don't finish high school, and in particular communities 50 percent don't finish. Those people used to be able to go to the mill and get a job, but those jobs aren't here anymore. So there's a big problem here, with regards to structural unemployment that needs to be addressed.

Another issue is the issue of violence. The violence that is happening in the community is a reflection of us, it's a reflection of society. The overarching history that young people have learned is that violence is the way of doing things. It's the "macho" thing that we mentioned before: like "might makes right." That also carries over in attitudes toward women—domestic violence. Our society is becoming much more violent. Young people know that the United States went to Panama and killed lots of black people, looking for Noriega. In black communities, we know that, but it's not known in general. Young people pick up on that.

The last point I would like to make is the whole issue of organization. Young people need to be

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Bill Robinson

Young people need to be organized. They will organize themselves if we don't take a role in organizing them.

Carl Redwood

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organized. They will organize themselves if we don't take a role in organizing them. But the key to youth organization, particularly for teenagers or adolescents, is that it has to be "contrary." They have to be contrary and we have to allow that in an acceptable way. But, like you said [Tom Murphy], we do need to take inventory and see what's out there, and put kids in positive, supervised activities who would otherwise be involved in unsupervised activities.

The other thing that bothers me is the "lock them up" attitude. That scares me. That's the flip side of the violence thing. That's the same "macho" attitude and that is the predominant attitude of the majority of society. We have to work toward changing that attitude, for real. We have to learn to be a more caring society.

BJ I would like to make one more point too, about that \$15 million that is being spent on youth programs. A lot of times when we give money in our society, we give it, and we tell people to spend it the wrong way. For example, the government comes back and says: "I'll fund you for \$300,000, but first I want youth involved with your program to be below the poverty line, etc., etc." In the City of Pittsburgh and other cities, too, a lot of agency people have not had an opportunity to do what they know is best. They always have to please someone to get funds.

Let's not just look at the \$15 million that is going to the agencies. The Casey Foundation came to the City of Pittsburgh with millions of dollars, with the help of professionals and others set up one of the worst programs this city ever saw. Everybody was quiet. Why? Because the Board of Education and other top organizations were getting most of the money, not the agencies. Who got blamed for the waste—the agencies and the communities. Community agencies never get the opportunity to do what they know best.

PC Well we talked about raising the employment rate. I would just like to add a pessimistic note: Demographers have noted for quite some time that the job growth in this country is in service sector jobs. Low paying, no career, dead-end jobs. We want to create jobs, and if these are the jobs we have to offer young people, young people without an education, my feeling is that it is not going to be too appealing.

Moreover, when you have adults that are unemployed and they're competing with kids who are also unemployed, the adults are going to want first dibs at whatever jobs there are. So my feeling is that if we want to create jobs, it's a much broader issue than a Pittsburgh issue. It's a national issue; it's a global issue. You've got structural transformation going on in the economy and it doesn't bode well for our prosperity in next century.

BC I would just like to say one more thing, and that is about leadership. We have to be prepared to speak out for the right things at the right time. To be prepared to say, "If you're in law enforcement, that sometimes you have to lock them up and throw the key away."

And, also to the mayor, "Your move to try to do something with gang members by hiring them shows tremendous leadership. To be prepared to do it takes a lot of guts." I'm in the same game you are, and I know the consequences.

TM Yes, it's an enormous risk. If you put 50 young kids to work, kids who have been involved in gangs, and two of them don't work or resort to violence, it has the potential to destroy the whole effort.

CR My son came home from school with a sign that said "PIRU FOREVER." It's some gang tag. And I'm trying to think, how do I deal with this? It's a tough question. What do you say to an eight-year old who comes home with something that glorifies a gang. I know there is no real answer here. But it

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...the district attorneys of the state of Pennsylvania are adamantly opposed to the 'three strikes and you're out' proposal.

Bob Colville

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does raise the question of how we deal with these situations. We need to proceed with caution.

FT I tend to be optimistic about the whole thing. I don't much get involved in debates over "three strikes and you're out" because they tend to polarize people. Although, I tend to think that such legislation is not the answer. I do think, however, that we must pay some particular attention to the most violent of the kids when safety is an issue, especially in some of the highest crime neighborhoods. There is a need to deal with violence on the one hand. But primarily, and principally, probably the two biggest supporters of long-term solutions of crime reduction at the table are Bob Colville and me, because day in and day out we see the evidence that the war on drugs has failed miserably. If you want to lose the war on drugs, let law enforcement alone carry it out.

I believe an appropriate response requires long-term, proactive strategy to address crime prevention. We have for too long dealt with kids, dysfunctional kids, rather than addressing the potential in kids. I think to do that, it will take real leadership to forget about the prevailing public sentiment (of lock 'em up) in order to forge ahead and put together partnerships within the community.

We are a fragmented society. We have government institutions, educational institutions, human service institutions, and I think we need to step back, take a deep breath, and see how we can establish linkages between these groups to solve problems rather than trying to deal with crime prevention in such a fragmented effort.

I'm optimistic because I think Pittsburgh is particularly well set to accomplish such a coordinated effort. We continue to have strong values as a community, we continue to have strong neighborhoods, which is at the core of prevention, and we continue to have strong foundations, all of which other cities don't have. And

I think that one of the best indications for success is that even though crime numbers are taking off, which has people up in arms and scared to death, our crime numbers, generally speaking, are lower than the rest of the country.

So, as a result, we still have time to turn the corner. Perhaps what the crime statistics have done is simply, hopefully, made some of the suburbs and some of the outlying areas realize that this is not an inner-city problem or an African-American problem but a societal problem, and unless we deal with it as a group, we are not going to beat it.

BJ Mayor Murphy, help us to build strength in African-American communities. We have to solve our own problems. If we can continue to build strength within our own communities, then we will be able to work harder on all of our problems.

TM Bernie, in my mind there are three issues. The key issue is jobs, because it gives people a sense of themselves, a sense of future. The second issue is public housing, because institutionally, public housing doesn't work. It's degrading. As you know, there are no churches, no stores, and nothing that resembles a community. We want to focus on how to change the whole management and philosophy of public housing in the city. The third issue is how to introduce young people to opportunities that we believe will exist in Pittsburgh as we shape the economic base.

MN On behalf of the Institute of Politics at the University of Pittsburgh I want to thank all of you for your comments on this most important issue.

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I will say that, if the state goes with mandatories, you will fill the prisons.

Bob Colville

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Throughout the FORUM discussion a number of potential interventions were explored and debated. Some interventions involved public policy; while others included changes to programs, the bureaucracy, and the media; and still other interventions required changes of heart and political will.

There was not a complete consensus on each of the interventions suggested, but everyone agreed that a number of short-term and long-term solutions must be put in place. Many of the participants agreed with Fred Theiman when he suggested that Pittsburgh is particularly well poised to take action. Following is a summary of some of the suggestions:

There seemed to be consensus that employment is a critical component; this included jobs for youth and adults. Moreover, it was suggested by Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy that job training programs be restructured so that participants know that there is a job available to them at the end of their experience.

Media reports on random violence ought to be placed within a larger context that more accurately reflects the cities' total experience with violence.

The issues facing kids who don't join gangs must be addressed. (As Carl Redwood suggested, the largest gang of kids are kids who sit inside because they are afraid to go outside.) It is important to know how to talk to these kids and provide alternatives to them. Adequate financing should be provided.

In order to make an impact on the recidivism rate, drug and alcohol counseling should be provided in prisons and in after care. At the same time, adequate prevention and treatment programs should be readily accessible.

The most dangerous criminals should be taken off the streets for a very long time. However, Robert Colville indicated that he does not support mandatory sentencing and the notion of "three strikes and you're out."

The issues of social isolation found in public housing and the welfare system also require solutions. There was some debate as to whether the welfare system helps to perpetuate the problem.

William Robinson suggested that a portion of drug confiscation money be returned to the communities from which it came rather than to the criminal justice system.

Issues of racism, particularly with respect to employment, must be proactively addressed and neighborhood empowerment must be supported.

Elizabeth Beck, Editor

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B I O G R A P H I E S

Robert Colville is district attorney of Allegheny County and is a graduate of Duquesne University School of Law. Prior to becoming district attorney, Colville was in law enforcement, where he served as a patrolman and chief of police. He belongs to numerous organizations and has received a number of special awards.

Phyllis Coontz is an assistant professor in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. Her primary area of research is social, mental health, and crime policy. She is currently conducting a state-wide survey examining gender and racial bias in the court system of Pennsylvania. She has published articles on divorce, the effect of unemployment on fathers' involvement with their small children, involuntary commitment, women involved in crime, and child abuse.

Bernard Jones is the assistant director of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. He is the founder of Urban Youth Action Inc., Misters, Inc., and Misters Investment Association. Jones is the founder and the president of Poise Foundation, which addresses problems of African Americans.

Tom Murphy was elected mayor of Pittsburgh in 1993. Prior to serving as mayor he represented the 20th district (Allegheny County) in the Pennsylvania House. He has been active in neighborhood organizing and is a former Peace Corps volunteer. Murphy, who serves on the boards of many non-profit organizations, holds a master's degree in Urban Planning from Hunter College.

Mark Nordenberg is professor of law at the University of Pittsburgh. He has also served as dean of the School of Law and acting provost for the University. His area of specialization is civil litigation. He has published in a number of law journals and has taught at the University of Augsburg in Augsburg, Germany.

Carl Redwood is the assistant director of the Hill House Association in Pittsburgh. He has a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Pittsburgh, where he is an adjunct faculty member. He has been involved with African-American issues and issues facing the Hill District for a number of years.

William Robinson represents the 19th district (Allegheny County) in the Pennsylvania House. He serves on the Education, Health, and Welfare, Urban Affairs, and Appropriations Committees. He has a master's degree in political science. Prior to entering the legislature he served as the political editor of the *New Pittsburgh Courier* and was a member of Pittsburgh City Council.

Fredrick Thieman is the United States attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania and a partner in Hilner, Thieman and Fraas. He is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, where he was the assistant editor of the *Law Review*. He serves on numerous committees, councils, boards, and academies.

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