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has similar things, if you have three felonies, and they don't have to be violent felonies, they can put you in prison for 35 years to life. It didn't stop anything. It just made it worse.

I really do think you have to turn people around. You can't give up on anybody. I know it's going to be hard. Some of these people are hard people to work with, and some will never change, but you have to work in that direction because the end result is more danger.

I know in Portland, one of the big problems you're having is L.A.-based gangs. Sureno gangs, primarily based in Southern California, are now spread around the country. I saw Sureno gangs fighting Latin Kings in Delaware, and the reason why that is so is because L.A. has suppressed and squeezed gang communities. We have 40 gang injunctions in the city of L.A.

All we've done is make crime slightly less in L.A., even though it's not really that better. But we've spread out the problem around the country. In Storm Lake, Iowa, they were worried about MS 13 (Mara Salvatrucha) and the Latin Kings going to war. This is going on in Chicago too. You have the same problem: L.A. and Chicago are squeezing the gangs, but all they're doing is spreading it out. So now part of that 800,000 to a million new gang members are guys that are imitating L.A. gangs or being recruited by L.A. gangs, but most have never been to L.A. So we're just spreading the problem. It's not just U.S., it's global.

In Mexico you have a large number of L.A.-based and California-based gangsters raised in the U.S. and deported. In Central America, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala you see the presence of L.A.-based gangs.

From 1996 to today, they deported close to 700,000 criminally involved undocumented people around the world, but primarily to Mexico and Central America. That's a whole lot of people. That could change a culture in a place like El Salvador.

Part of the problem in Portland is the rise of L.A.-based or other major areas gangs, like Nortenos. Some of them aren't even guys from those places. All it takes is one or two guys to set up shop in that area and recruit people and establish a gang in that area. I think that's one of the big problems.

**J.T.:** Are we seeing a new age of gang globalization?

**L.R.:** Yes, absolutely. But where people think it's coming from is Latin America to

us, it's the other way around: It's coming from us to Mexico and Central America.

Now there's been drug cartels in Mexico that have been around for several generations. They're recruiting some of these tattooed, jobless, homeless mostly, gang kids that are building up these drug cartels, which is a problem in those countries separate from the U.S., but unfortunately it's being fueled by a large number of deportees that have criminal records and are being deported in large numbers and don't know where to go.

**J.T.:** In Portland, the mayor is advocating special zones where people who've had gun or drug violations are excluded from certain areas.

**L.R.:** Those are kind of like the gang injunctions that L.A. has. This model doesn't work. Kids are under scrutiny that they wouldn't be put under in any Third World dictatorship. Kids can't have cell phones. Two or three kids can't be on the corner at the same time. If you're a former gang member or you were a prison gang member and you talk to another gang member, you could be picked up. You can't have bats at certain hours. The curfew, for them, is 6 p.m. They make things worse.

I don't know your mayor, and I don't doubt he's doing what he thinks is the right thing to do. But I really want people to know that it's only politically expedient, it's not a long-range solution.

**J.T.:** Does that sort of an approach end up targeting minorities?

**L.R.:** Absolutely. All those gang injunctions. All 40 of them (in L.A.) are in black or brown communities. But there are white gangs. There are Asian gangs, but all the 40 gang injunctions are in black or brown communities. You'll see in Portland that that's where they'll end up being.

**J.T.:** What are we as a society getting right in dealing with gangs?

**L.R.:** Gangs, to me, are a reflection of vacuums, empties: social, economic, political empties. In almost every community where people have revitalized themselves, where they've brought in arts, culture and have created new ways to have work, all these communities don't have gangs or hardly any gangs. There's not that many communities, but a few are getting it together.

What I would propose is that instead of gangs zones we create peace zones. In those

zones you would have churches where kids could come in and use those services. Schools would open up later. There would be jobs training. All the businesses would try to hire kids from the community and train them. Even the police would be involved by not harassing the kids but by working with the kids.

It would be a place where we work toward the well-being of our children and our youth and provide services, jobs training, anything so that these children won't be taken into gangs. If you have vacuums, the kids get taken in. If you have decent long-range relationships with adults and youths and teachers and students and even the police, you're going to find that gangs will have a hard time getting a foothold in those communities. Those are the long-range non-expedient policies we have to start looking at now. Everything else is making the problem worse.

**J.T.:** You had a long career working as a journalist. What do you think the media misses on this issue, and how well do you think the public really understands what's happening?

**L.R.:** I think what happens, unfortunately, is that they tend to go with the official police statements and tend to get misinformation. I've worked with some good police officers, and some of them are very honest and very knowledgeable. But law enforcement often has to make the problem so bad and so scary that people vote for all these policies that result in more crime.

**J.T.:** Local law enforcement is being used to carry out national policies on immigration and terrorism. Specifically, what I'm thinking about is Portland's collusion with the Joint Terrorism Task Force and how the ICE has been used by local law enforcement to enforce immigration policies. Does this impact the issue of gangs?

**L.R.:** Yeah, I think it's unfortunate. I

think people support these deportation policies. They sound good because it involves deporting criminals, but a lot of the problems too are being exported to other countries. For instance, there was no crack in El Salvador in the early '90s. Now crack is big in those countries because it's become a jump-off point from Colombia to Central America to Mexico. I just think that

people have to be aware of those policies. Expedient isn't workable. We've become a global economy. We've have an impact globally.

**J.T.:** When urban areas are gentrified, how does that affect gangs?

**L.R.:** We did a study on some of these gang injunctions and we found that most of them were not in the worst gang communities. Some of them were areas that were being gentrified. For example, if you take

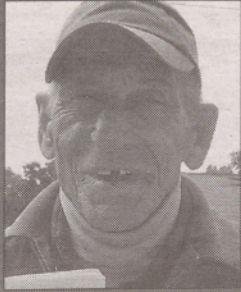
downtown L.A. which for a long time was Skid Row. You had this enclave of homeless people, mostly African-Americans. What happened is they started building downtown art galleries and cafes. And they had a gang injunction against some little gang, no one had ever heard of them. And what they did is they used that to clear out parts of Skid Row to make way for gentrification. In another area here in L.A. is a place called the Avenues. They're mostly Mexican. They're part of Highland Park, and recently they had one big effort where they brought in other police departments. But Highland Park is now becoming gentrified and there's monied people coming in. In Chicago, I saw the same thing.

It's good they're revitalizing communities; it's good that they're rebuilding, but unfortunately they're squeezing the community and not keeping it intact. They're just throwing people out. And now you're seeing gangs in suburban communities. They're now in Riverside. They're now in Lancaster. I'm sure the same is happening in Portland.




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