

Kimi Lent

I am a Gang Intervention Specialist and an appointed Gang Expert for the Los Angeles Superior Courts. I've worked in, and with, people in our underserved communities for 20-plus years. In 1995, I opened a small alternative high school for youth involved with gangs and/or the criminal justice system. This population needed special programs, social services and a creative academic education if they were going to succeed. I created programs with positive experiences such as camping, sports, social events, field trips, and lots of projects. I took them to places that they'd never experienced before, not far from where they lived.

I learned quickly about the harsh realities of gun violence after I opened my school. My students that I deeply cared about were affected each day after school; the environments they lived in were heartbreaking. Each year, I lost one to three students, killed or disabled for life by gun violence. My classroom had a population of 25 students each year. Do the math.

I witnessed how families and children were treated with no aftercare or assistance...how our local city, county, and state systems didn't care. Our criminal justice system gets it wrong far too often. Our harsh sentencing schemes have destroyed so many young lives. Statistics show (that) 93% of those with extreme and excessive sentences are Black and brown males coming from underserved communities. They are lives that could have been saved.

We have to do something about the lack of effective services for our youth. There aren't enough options to keep young people from getting caught up in gangs and criminal activity that can lead to violence.

Recorded at:
Long Beach, CA
2/16/2021
1:18 pm

