

Pearson Edexcel
International Advanced Level

English Language

International Advanced Subsidiary

Unit 1: Language: Context and Identity

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Source Booklet

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Text A is an edited transcript of a speech delivered by Dianne Feinstein to the United States Senate on October 23rd, 2006. Feinstein was Senator for the state of California.

Gang Violence: An Environment of Fear

On September 24 of this year, Los Angeles experienced a new low.

Three-year old Kaitlyn Avila was shot point-blank by a gang member who mistakenly thought her father was a member of a rival gang.

The gang member shot and wounded her father, then intentionally fired into little Kaitlyn's chest. This is the first time law enforcement officials remember a young child being "targeted" in a gang shooting.

This shooting is but a symptom of the disease that has taken hold of our cities – and that disease is gang violence. The violence perpetrated by gang members on one another, on police officers and on innocent bystanders is horrifying.

Gang violence is an attack not only on individuals, but also on our communities.

It stops mothers from allowing their children to play outside. It prevents the elderly from taking walks in their neighborhoods. It creates an environment of fear.

It is well past time for the federal government to provide a hand of assistance to state and local law enforcement. It is well past time to come to grips with the escalating levels of violence.

The key is a balanced, comprehensive approach.

First, we must help those on the front lines. This means new laws, tougher penalties, and millions for investigations and prosecutions.

Second, we must identify and fund successful community programs. These are programs like the Gang Risk Intervention Program – GRIP – at Lennox Middle School in Inglewood, which I visited in August.

The program's results are clear: 80% of participants graduated high school and stayed away from gangs.

We've got to replicate successful programs like this one across the country.

And third, we must make it safer for witnesses to come forward and testify. You can't win cases, if witnesses fear for their life.

When you look at the big picture, you see that gangs continue to infiltrate our communities.

They control neighborhoods through violence. They traffic in drugs, theft, extortion, prostitution, guns, and murder.

The problem is immense. It is on the streets. It is in the prisons. It is in big cities and small. It is in California, and every other State.

Here are the key questions:

How do we keep our youth out of these gangs in the first place?
How do we encourage and protect witnesses who come forward and testify?
And what do we do when the gangs perpetrate violence in our communities?

It is clear to me that a commitment has to be made on each of these fronts.

The gang bill I am sponsoring would encourage this kind of balanced approach.

Simply put, it would be a balanced program – with new programs and funding for prosecutions, and support for programs to prevent people from joining gangs in the first place.

Simply put, we would try to replicate and expand the state and local models that have worked in the past.

And we would establish a clearinghouse to collect “best practices,” so that this isn’t theory, but what works on the street. But at the same time, this bill would establish new crimes and tougher federal penalties.

So the bill I have offered would make it a separate federal crime for any criminal street gang member to commit, conspire or attempt to commit violent crimes – including murder, kidnapping, arson, extortion – in furtherance of the gang.

And the penalties for gang members committing such crimes would increase considerably.

The bill would also create a new crime for recruiting juveniles and adults into a criminal street gang. Currently, there is no federal crime that covers this.

This balanced approach – of prevention plus tough penalties – will send a clear message to gang members.

The bill would also provide \$270 million in funds for witness protection grants.

Too often, witnesses are afraid to come forward and tell the truth due to fear.

Bottom line: the growth in size and complexity of gangs has become a national problem, requiring a federal response.

As long as I am a member of the United States Senate, I will make it one of my highest priorities to make that federal response a reality.

I hope you will join me in this effort.

Text B is an edited extract from an interview in *Litro Magazine* between Patricia Duffaud and Jason Figaro, an ex-gang member. It was published in London in May 2013.

Little Boys with Guns: An Interview with an Ex-Gang Member.

Now forty-one, he was in prison, on and off, for 13 years, for violence, assault and robberies. He was addicted to heroin and crack cocaine. He now mentors young gang members in East London. I talked to him about transgressing the law, and about his insights into the current generation of gangs.

Rebellion

"I was very anti-authority. I didn't want people to tell me what to do. I was kicked out of school when I was 14, no other school would accept me. They gave me homing tuition and I flung that out the window. They put me into a special school, I refused to go. They put me in a school for bad behaved boys, I went there for a few weeks, and I walked out. You know sometimes, at the age I am now I wish I could turn back the hand of time and just do things again. Obviously you can't but what I can do now is make my future better."

Rather than the cash, it's the feelings of rebellion Jason remembers. Everything around him reinforced those feelings.

"I found the police very racist, back in the day. If you was black, you know what I mean, you were the criminal. That's how it was. I was getting pulled up on the street three or four times a day."

Jason is aware that the police may have thought they had reasons to stop and search him but feels the multiple daily stops and searches were harassment.

His treatment by the police pushed Jason further into a criminal mindset.

In the end, the decision to stop drugs and criminality was a personal one, helped along by his Christian religion.

Today's Gangs

Jason feels that the one positive aspect of his past is that he can now teach young gang members that there is no future in being in a gang. Jason sees the benefit of his situation.

"I'm not proud of what I've done in my past, but I'm not ashamed because it makes me the man I am now. I can stand now and talk with a history of what I've done and show them, look, it does not pay off. The only way I could have gone was death."

Another benefit born from his experience is that he can find ways to relate to these young people. When mentoring for Gangsline in Barking, he uses a direct, no nonsense approach:

"You know, when I talk to them, I don't talk to them with kid gloves. I'm not gonna talk to them and say, you shouldn't do this, you shouldn't do that. I'm gonna tell them straight, tell them exactly how it messed up my life."

In a year, he's taken three boys out of gangs:

"They've flung their guns away and everything. They're still young, one's only just turned 16, he's a good boy. He's still got a temper and that and he's got issues with authority but I'm working with him."

He sees a clear difference with the gangs of his youth. He explains that the prime factor in young gang members is status.

"Nowadays it's all about stature, right. They like to be recognised. They need to be noticed. They need to have power over other people. It's not about who's making more money, it's about 'who's badder than who'."

Another new development since Jason's youth is the proliferation of knives and guns.

"Now back in my day, we would have a good fist fight. Now, it's nothing to do with fists. They will pull out a knife, stab you. They will shoot you. I don't know where they're getting their guns from. These little boys, it's unbelievable what kind of weapons they've got now."

How do the boys get involved in the first place, I ask?

"Sometimes you're drawn into it. Sometimes you don't even know that you're in a gang. When I first got into a gang I thought I was with a bunch of lads, having a laugh."

It's a self-fulfilling, sinister spiral. The boys dress like gangsters, they get classified by the police as gang members, then balk at being suspected for no reason. Jason refers to them throughout as little boys, children, something society forgets when it recoils in fear of "hoodies". Jason recounts one tragic case.

"The youngest person I actually spoke to was ten. And he was carrying guns. And you know what, four weeks later he was dead. This is how it is. Because these boys, they don't value life."



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www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/speeches
www.litro.co.uk

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