

Curbing Violent Clashes at the Probation Camps and Halls

On Sunday September 5, 2010, a fight broke out between approximately 30 minors at Camp Francis Scobee, one of the camps in the Challenger Memorial Youth Center, located in Lancaster. The melee had racial overtones and included fights between African American and Latino minors. The fighting resulted in injuries to both minors and staff members.

The following week, on Tuesday September 14, 2010, there was another fight, this time at the Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall in the San Fernando Valley. According to the Probation Department, there were 16 minors involved in fighting between African Americans and Latinos. Fortunately, there were no injuries.

These incidents do not appear to be isolated occurrences. The Probation Department reports that there have been 15 major clashes between minors at the Probation Camps in 2010, six at Camp Scobee alone. Eight instances of Camp fights

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had racial overtones, with clashes between African Americans and Latinos. Six instances of Camp violence were categorized as gang related clashes between rival gangs.

In addition to these conflicts at the Camps in 2010, there were also 15 major disturbances between minors at the Juvenile Halls. Eleven of these outbursts have taken place at Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall. Of the total conflicts, six have been characterized as racial clashes between African American and Latino minors, and eight have been characterized as gang related.

These fights have resulted in injuries to both minors and staff. These altercations disrupt the day-to-day activities of the Camps and Halls and interfere with the delivery of programs and services to the minors within the custody of the Probation Department. This, in turn, impedes the ability of the County and its Probation Department to implement the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement with the United States Department of Justice.

This is not a new phenomenon. As early as 2006, there were news reports of growing racial tensions and violence in the Los Angeles Juvenile facilities. This has included reports of rioting at three Juvenile facilities, including Camp McNair, within the Challenger Memorial Youth Center. Moreover, Probation Officers have expressed concern that California prison gangs have the ability to direct violence at Juvenile Camps and Halls.

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The Probation Department must provide minors placed in custody a safe and healthy environment. The fundamental objective of the residential treatment service experience is to aid in reducing the incidents and impact of crime in the community. This is accomplished by providing each minor with a residential treatment program geared to developing effective life skills. The Probation Department must also teach minors to cope with other youth of different races and ethnicities. The Probation Department must reduce the influence of gangs, especially in the confines of the custody setting of the Juvenile Halls and Camps.

Ultimately, the Board of Supervisors is responsible for ensuring that our juvenile facilities are safe so that the goal of the community reintegration of our minors under the supervision of the County Department of Probation can be accomplished in a structured and strategic manner while ensuring that the safety of minors is not jeopardized.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Direct the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Probation Officer, in consultation with the Sheriff, to prepare a report addressing the following items:

1. A detailed account of the disturbances at Camp Francis Scobee on September 5, 2010, and at Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall on September 14, 2010;
2. The common patterns and characteristics of the disturbances which have occurred at both the Juvenile Halls and Camps, including the triggering

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- events, the gang affiliations of the minors involved in the fighting, the actions in the aftermath of the disturbances (*i.e.*, discipline, transfer of youth, activities to resolve disputes, relations between youth as it affected Halls and Camp discipline, etc.);
3. The extent to which prison gangs or other influences outside the Camps or Halls, have influenced the disturbances in the Camps and Halls;
 4. The similarities, if any, between the fighting and clashes at the Juvenile Halls and Camps, and incidents at the jails run by the Sheriff's Department; and
 5. Proposals to address these problems, including, but not limited to, enhanced sentencing for racially motivated violence, required racial sensitivity and anger management classes or counseling, alternative dispute resolution activities, and/or opportunities to establish a dialog among minors on race and ethnic relations.

This report is due in 30 days.