

*Phoebe Haden:*

Good morning everyone. I'm **Phoebe Haden**. I'm the dean of this law school. I want to welcome all of you to the University of Maryland, Francis King Carey School of Law. I speak for everyone in the law school when I say we are delighted to have you here this morning. Thank you especially to the Attorney General for joining us today. And our most sincere thanks to the members of the National Task Force on Children's Exposure to Violence. I understand we call that CEV. And the many distinguished witnesses gathered here to testify.

Your visit is an honor and auspicious for many reasons, but most important is the stark gravity and urgency of your work. How can we accept in 2008 more than 60 percent of the children in this country were exposed to violence? Violence that was in their homes. Violence that represented abuse in their schools and in their neighborhoods. It is truly hard to imagine these data reflect the reality of the ongoing violence for most of our society's children in their daily lives. It's just truly an extraordinary concept. Hard to grab hold of.

And 40 percent of those children who were exposed are direct victims of 2 or more violent acts. These are startling facts, but we will here more and deepen our understanding of CEV from today's testimony. We are all indebted to the Department of Justice and the Center for Disease Control for conducting the first national survey that produced this kind of data. They will frame the discussion and deliberations in the next two days, but more importantly, in the future. And I am confident this will be a wake up call to which many will respond.

I particularly admire the work of this task force, because it underscores that witnessing violence can be as devastating as a blow to the head or shot in the chest. A survivor of Pearl Harbor put it this way. Watching his shipmates gunned down, he said, "left a tattoo in my soul." It's truly hard to imagine, but the kind of violence that he experienced is the kind of violence that our children experience. And it is as terrifying to him today as it was 70 years ago when he was a boy of 16.

And it is deeply sobering to consider how living with violence in so many communities across this nation will affect the future well being of our children, but most importantly, of our nation. The depth and breadth of CEV is discouraging. But I believe there are and can be more breakthroughs. The horror of the Penn State

sexual abuse scandal, for example, and the sustained publicity it has received may mark a tipping point as some commentators have already suggested.

But certainly task force meetings like this one, within communities like ours, will help to tip the scale. So it's important for me to emphasize today that you are here to devise strategies, as well as listen to testimony about the experiences of people coping with CEV. And we at the law school are truly eager to incorporate your work into our own work. Just a few weeks ago, for example, Professor **Martha Ertman** of our law school and her students and others, convened a law school conference about lesbian, gay and transgendered teens who are bullied. We have hosted other events this year and every year on domestic violence, on community violence and the trauma experienced by children who are homeless.

Our students can work in student organizations like Why Murder and a half dozen clinics that touch the lives of children in this community. These clinics are a part of the clinical law program of this law school that is headed by **Michael Pinard**, who, Attorney General, you will recall was recently recognized as a White House champion of change at a program hosted by the Attorney General.

Bottom line, the children in this city and others across the country need this task force's work. And we are thrilled to be able to host this event. Now it's my pleasure to introduce the many who is responsible for this effort, Eric Holder, Attorney General of the United States, and the creator of the Task Force on CEV. Mr. Holder is working in familiar territory these days. He began his career at the Department of Justice in its public integrity section. He returned to DOJ during the Clinton administration as deputy attorney general and now you know leads the department.

During his tenure, the Department of Justice has shown a fierce commitment to children, particularly in its efforts to safeguard them from abuse and sexual exploitation. As many of you know, this summer DOJ joined forces with the Department of Homeland Security to expose an international child abuse network that traded online images of children being sexually abused, some of whom were only infants. There were 43 arrests in the United States and 72 pedophiles charged worldwide.

Like the Attorney General, I hope that this administration will be remembered for this kind of important work that was done then and that will be done as a result of this task force efforts. It's powerful work. And I know the task force will be as successful as the previous example. I know that that will be a result of the Attorney General's leadership. So join me in welcoming Mr. Holder.

*[Clapping]*

*Eric Holder:*

Thank you. Thank you. This is my kind of audience. I have not said a word and I've already gotten a standing ovation. Perhaps I probably ought to leave now, you know. Well, good morning to you all and thanks so much for coming. And thank you, Dean, for those kind words. We have been friends for a number of years. She could have said other things about me. But I want to thank you for all that you and your staff have done to help bring together this really extraordinary group of leaders, experts and advocates. And I also want to thank University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law for hosting today's meeting and providing a forum for this very critical discussion.

Now thank you all for your participation and for your commitment to protecting and empowering the most precious and vulnerable among us. And that is our children. The American children. At every level of today's Justice Department, I want you to understand, that this work is a priority. We have a whole bunch of things that are on our plate ranging from national security to economic fraud. But this is a priority. And I'm particularly grateful for my colleagues in the Office of Justice programs, the Office on Violence Against Women and the **Cops** office for their leadership in developing and advancing many of the department's most innovative and effective efforts, including the new Defending Childhood Initiative and the new Defending Childhood task force.

Now today, as the 13 members of this task force gather for the first time, we are launching a new chapter in the work of protecting our young people from violence and from harm. And ensuring that in this country every child has a safe place to live, to learn and hopefully to grow. This task force is comprised of renowned experts on the issues surrounding children exposed to violence. Its members work to improve the lives of children in large cities, rural towns, as well as in tribal communities. They represent the legal, medical, research, law enforcement, faith and survivor

communities. And while they bring a diversity of perspectives to their work, they all share a common passion for the mission that brings us together today.

Now on behalf of our nation's Department of Justice, as well as President Obama and the entire administration, I want to thank each of our task force members, especially our co-chairs, Joe Tory and \_\_\_\_\_ for devoting their time, energy and expertise to this very important work. And I want to thank everyone here for supporting their efforts and particularly courageous individuals who have come to share their personal stories with us. We look forward to hearing from you and also to learning from you.

I also want to recognize two key members of our nation's United States attorney community. On of my good friends, **Rod Rosetein**, a United States attorney for the District of Maryland, and **Ron Matchum**, the US attorney for the District of Columbia. Thank you all as well for joining us and all that you've done to strengthen the department's groundbreaking Defending Childhood Initiative.

Now the work that you are leading in each of your offices has helped us better understand and more effectively address the threats that children across this region are facing within DC, Maryland and the surrounding areas. The cases that Rod and Ron have advanced, the lives that they've touched and enriched and the communities that they've helped to transform, I think really remind each of us that the often difficult work of improving circumstances and outcomes for young people who are at risk and in need solutions are possible. Change is possible. Progress is possible. And the changes that we hope for are, gain, possible. But they're only possible if we are willing to think creatively, if we are willing to act collaboratively, and if we enlist the help of a variety of partners. That's what this task force is all about. Bringing together a wealth of experience and talent to focus on one of the greatest public safety epidemics of our time – children's exposure to violence.

Now, like many of you, for me protecting the health and safety of our children has been both a personal and a professional concern for decades. Maybe not for all of you, but for me it's been decades. This is a young looking crowd. As a prosecutor, as a judge, as a United States attorney, as Deputy Attorney General, addressing the causes and remedying the consequences of children's exposure to violence was really a prominent part of my

daily work. Today, as Attorney General, and as the parent of three teenagers, it remains a top priority

Over the years I've learned that we must confront this problem head on by clearly and thoroughly understanding what we and our children are up against. During the last 1990s when I served as Deputy Attorney General, I had the opportunity to work with leading researchers to take an in depth look at the problem of children's exposure to violence. One of those gentlemen who helped in those days is \_\_\_\_\_. Dr. Marans. We learned that whether a child was a witness to or a direct victim of violence, the experience was associated with long term physical, psychological and emotional harm, as well as a higher risk for drug and alcohol abuse later in life. We discovered that children exposed to violence fail in school more often than other kids and are much more likely to suffer depression, anxiety and other post traumatic disorders.

We found out that children exposed to violence are more likely to develop chronic diseases and to have trouble forming emotional attachments. And they're even more likely to go on to commit violent crimes and to come into contact with our juvenile and criminal justice systems.

Now although our understanding of the nature and the impact of the problem has increased dramatically in the 1990s, we didn't really know how prevalent it was. Back then we didn't have comprehensive data that could give us the full story about where exactly violence touches the lives of children across age groups and across settings. And we didn't have the research to tell us about the cumulative effect of exposure to violence.

Well, now we do. And now, more than ever before, we must act. In 2009, during my first year as Attorney General, the Justice Department released findings from the National Survey on Children Exposed to Violence. It is the most comprehensive survey to date on the extent of violence, crime and abuse in children's lives. Research showed, as the dean indicated, that the majority of our kids, more than 60 percent of them. Think about that. More than 60 percent of the American children have been exposed to violence, crime and abuse.

Now these patterns of violence can take many forms. From pushing, hitting and bullying to witnessing or experiencing gun,

knife, gang, domestic or sexual violence. And they aren't limited to any one region, to any one community or to any one demographic group. Exposure can happen at home. It can happen in the streets. It can happen during school. Or on the internet where children face serious and unprecedented threats.

No matter where you live today, across this country, children are more likely to be exposed to violence and to crime than to adults. Now think about that. Children are more likely to be exposed to violence than adults. This problem has significant consequences for individuals, for families and for entire communities. It affects each one of us. All of us have a role to play in effectively addressing it.

Now we simply cannot ignore the needs of our children. The justice system in a society that fails to make protecting children a top priority is failing in its most fundamental responsibility. And that's why failure is not, and has never been, an option. And because of the work of leaders and partners in, and beyond, this room today, it's not, I believe, even a probability.

Now despite the challenges that we face and the scale of the seriousness of the crisis that we're working to address, I think that we have good cause for optimism. We know that it is possible. In fact, it is within our power to help the kids who need us the most. Research has shown that quality intervention programs can foster healthy child development and, in many cases, counter the negative effects of violence.

We've also seen that early interventions with children can help them avoid repeat victimization and future involvement with the criminal justice system. At the Department of Justice, we have made, what I think is an historic commitment to applying this knowledge. I am very proud that through our landmark Defending Childhood Initiative we are now directing resources for the express purpose of reducing children's exposure to violence, raising awareness of its ramifications and advancing scientific inquiry on its causes and its characteristics.

Now the office is covering a broad range of issues. From justice – from violence against women and juvenile justice to community based policing and victims of crime. Are actively engaged in coordinating the department's efforts to prevent children's exposure to violence. And we are building on existing

partnerships with the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, as well as with our law enforcement partners in the field and with our US Attorneys offices across the country.

We've also embraced the reality that, while the federal government has a responsibility to act, our efforts cannot be successful without local police officers, community leaders, teachers, coaches, principals and, above all, parents. And we are working to ensure that professionals who work with children are sufficiently trained to identify those who have been exposed to violence and to respond to them appropriately.

To be effective and to make the progress that our children need and that our children deserve, we need the full attention, not only of the federal government, but also of state, tribal, local community, nonprofit and private sector partners. We have to do this in partnership with all of those groups. Indeed, we must engage the broadest possible spectrum of allies in order to prevent the violence against our young people. And we must \_\_\_\_\_ on the expertise, not only of policymakers, attorneys and advocates, but also of young people themselves. If we are smart enough to listen to them, I'm certain that they can make a meaningful difference in strengthening the work that we are all committed to doing.

Now in addition to their perspectives, we also need more information about current approaches. We need to know what works. But just as importantly, we need to know what does not work. So that policymakers and practitioners can make informed decisions about how to tailor solutions to meet the needs of individual communities. And that's why I think that this task force represents such a powerful and promising step forward.

I'm counting on its 13 members to carefully study this problem and to provide guidance to the department, and also to the public, on how we can improve our response to this issue and implement the solutions that we need. Now if history is any indicator, this task force like the task forces, like the one that we are talking about today, can really help to inspire extraordinary progress. For example, the President's task force on victims of crime, which was formed back in 1982, led to the creation of the Office for Victims of Crime. And it prompted really a sea change in how the criminal justice system treats victims. It paved the way for victims to become valued partners in the prosecution process and helped them to obtain the rights that they deserve. Specifically, the task

force recommended legislation to provide federally funding to assist state crime victim compensation programs and their work helped to advance the passage of the Victims of Crime Act of 1984.

That same year the Attorney General's task force on family violence helped to raise awareness about the profound and nationwide impact of domestic violence. A number of its recommendations, such as the need to recognize that family violence is criminal activity and the need to develop coordinated multidisciplinary community responses to domestic violence, became the core principles of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994.

Now today with the Defending Childhood task force, I believe this tradition continues. I'm confident that its members will strengthen the work that's underway to raise awareness about the issue of children exposed to violence, and that they will play a critically important role in forming responses to this national epidemic. In the coming months, this task force will hold four field hearings across the country to learn firsthand how violence is affecting our nation's children. By December 1 of next year, they will present me with a report documenting their findings and laying out recommendations for actions that the department and our partners can take to improve the current system of care for all of our children.

Now by hearing from and closely working with experts and practitioners, task force members will be uniquely positioned to add to our base of knowledge about how we can better support and better safeguard our children across the entirety of the United States. By giving us a better grasp of the prevalence and the consequences of exposure to violence and by showing us what works in mitigating its effects, I have every expectation that this effort will help us to better protect our children.

Now, of course, the real difference will come from the work that so many that you do in your neighborhoods and in your communities. When you respond to a domestic violence call where a young person is present, when you work to remove a child from an abusive setting, when you counsel a student who has been bullied, or when you recognize from the bench a lifetime of trauma in delinquent acts of a teenager, you have become a part of the

solution. And because of you, I believe that together we can transform America for the better. One child at a time.

To that end, I am now pleased to give the Defending Childhood Task Force its charge. The members of the Attorney General's Defending Childhood Task Force will conduct four hearings nationwide to learn from survivors, key practitioners, policymakers, academics and the public about the extent and impact of children's exposure to violence in the United States. The members will seek information about promising practices and intervention and prevention strategies that deserve increased attention from the Department of Justice, other federal agencies and state, local and tribal governments.

Based on the information collected at these hearings, the Defending Childhood Task Force will develop a final report to me presenting high level policy recommendations which will serve as a blueprint for preventing and addressing children's exposure to violence as victims and as witnesses. And for mitigating the negative effects experienced by children exposed to violence across the United States.

I want to thank you all once again for your service and for your willingness to accept what is a critical, critical responsibility. As you work to fulfill your duties, I encourage you to think creatively and broadly and to challenge us to consider what can be accomplished through innovation, collaboration and commitment to the young people who need us most and who are depending on us to act.

Now it is my privilege to introduce the co-chairs of the Defending Childhood Task Force and to turn the meeting over to them. **Joe Torre**. Joe Torre is the chairman of the Joe Torre Safe at Home Foundation. Its mission is to develop educational programs that will end the cycle of domestic violence and to save lives. In the nine years since its inception, the foundation has educated really thousands of students, parents, teachers and school faculty about the devastating effects of domestic violence. Currently reaching kids in nine schools and two community centers in New York City and in Los Angeles, Margaret's Place, a tribute to Mr. Torre's mother, Margaret, provides middle and high school students with a safe room to talk to each other and a professional counselor trained in domestic violence intervention and prevention about violence related issues.

Now since February 2011, Mr. Torre has served as Major League Baseball's executive vice president for baseball operations. Previously, and as we all know, but I'm gonna go through this anyway; he was a Major League manager for 29 seasons. Twelve of them with the New York Yankees. Yes. Native New Yorker. Whom he led to the playoffs every year, including six World Series appearances and four World Series championships. The glory days. But also during his 17 year playing career, Mr. Torre compiled 297 batting average, 2,342 hits, 252 homeruns and 1,185 RBIs. He hit over 305 times in his career. Was a nine time all-star. And was the 1971 National League MVP. Can you spell Cooperstown?

**Robert Listenbee, Junior**, has been a trial lawyer at the Defender Association of Philadelphia since 1986 and chief of the juvenile unit since 1997. He currently serves on several boards and committees that advocate for the rights and for the interests of children. These include the disproportionate minority contact subcommittee of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. He's also a member of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee of PCCD, which advises Pennsylvania's governor on juvenile justice policy.

He serves on the National Advisory Board of the National Juvenile Defender Center. And has participated in NJDC sponsored statewide assessments of the juvenile justice system in Indiana and Louisiana. This may be the hardest working many show business. He's also actively involved in the McArthur Foundation's \_\_\_\_ for Change Initiative in Pennsylvania. He's a team leader of the Pennsylvania Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network and president of JDAP, a statewide nonprofit professional organization established in 2006 to advocate for the rights and interests of Pennsylvania's children. And to speak on behalf of the juvenile defenders in the commonwealth.

Robert received his BA from Harvard University and his JD from the **Boalt Hall** School of Law at the University of California in Berkley.

So Joe and Robert, I want to thank you both once again. I wish you all a very productive day. And I look forward to hearing about and continuing this critical discussion. The work that you have is vitally important. We're all looking forward to the work and the

conclusions that you will reach. And the fate of our children is in your hands. So thank you all for the great work that I'm sure that you will do. Thank you.

*[Clapping]*

*Joe Torre:*

Than you Mr. Attorney General. That was – god, I was a pretty good player, I guess, huh? I forgot all about that stuff. Before Robert and I make some remarks we'd like to have our task force introduce themselves. Steven Marans, would you please start?

*Male 1:*

Good morning. My name is Steve Marans. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ professor of child psychiatry and professor of psychiatry at Yale University School of medicine where I direct the National Center for Children Exposed to Violence. A center that was established by then Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder and the Clinton White House, as well as the director of the Childhood Violent Trauma Center.

We've learned a great deal over the last decades about the impact of children exposed to violence. We know a good deal about the risk and protective factors. And know that early intervention, identification and social supports are the best ways of interrupting the cycle of outcomes that Attorney General Holder was referencing earlier.

And it was this kind of knowledge that led to a unique partnership that was developed in New Haven and then proliferated beyond New Haven around the country. A partnership between law enforcement and mental health professionals. Unlikely partners. That led to a better way of identifying kids and offering the help and support they needed. It also lead to a new brief family strengthening intervention that decreases the post traumatic stress symptoms and disorders in children by 73 percent when we're able to identify and treat families.

The problems of children exposed to violence are great and the cost to children, families, and indeed, to our entire country are enormous. But so are the opportunities. Mental health and law enforcement partnerships are just one example of many possible ways of collaboration. Whether in emergency rooms, social service agencies, schools, courts, neighborhood, and most important, in the homes of the children who are affected.

It's with great gratitude that I am serving on this task force. But it's especially with great gratitude to the Department of Justice, and, yes, to Attorney General Holder, who has been a leader over the last decades in helping us develop plans, comprehensive plans and a way of moving forward for the country. Thank you.

*Thea James:*

Good morning. My name is Thea James. I'm an emergency medicine physician at Boston Medical Center in Boston Massachusetts. This is a hospital that treats the majority of youth who are injured by violent crimes. I am the director of a violence intervention advocacy program there that works out of the emergency department. And we provide comprehensive care and support to youth who are our patients and are injured by violent crimes. We provide primarily housing, education, mental health, legal support, job readiness training, life skills training. And the goal of our intervention is to support and to guide them through recovery with the hopes that they will be able to reenter society as productive citizens and to become mentors themselves. And doing this work, which is primarily downstream, it has given us a window into the various different things that happen to these kids. And so we know that it requires more than just downstream work. You absolutely have to do a, what we call, 360 degree intervention and work upstream. We know that when the victim you're looking at is injured, they are not the only victim. Everyone who is in proximity to them is injured, and primarily the children in their communities and in their families.

So the work of this task force seems quite appropriate to address that particular issue. It's quite a privilege and an honor to be a part of this task force. And I look forward to what we will be able to do to work upstream and to address this issue.

*Jim McDonald:*

Good morning. My name is Jim McDonald. I'm the chief of the Long Beach, California Police Department. I'm in my thirty-first year in policing. I spent 29 years with the Los Angeles Police Department prior to going to Long Beach. It's certainly an honor for me to be able to sit on this panel and to be able to serve and be able to bring a police perspective to this issue.

My hope is that we'll be able to come away with an honest straightforward approach to children's exposure to violence. It's a cycle that we've all seen that goes generation to generation. We're not able to address that in silos, even with the best of intentions as so often we've tried to do. This task force brings a

multidisciplinary examination to the issue. And we have the opportunity to be able to hear witnesses from throughout the nation and hear different ways of dealing with it, different issues that – maybe some best practices that haven't been spread throughout the country. And I'm hopeful that we'll be able to come away with a product at the end of the day that we can present to the Attorney General that will become a blueprint for dealing with this issue that will be valuable and hopefully a great resource for those that dedicate their lives to making the role and the lives of children better.

Thank you, Mr. Attorney General, for bringing your attention to this very, very important topic. Thank you.

*Greg Boyle:*

Good morning. My name is Greg Boyle. I'm the executive director and founder of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles. It's the largest gang intervention rehab and reentry program in the country. About 15,000 folks walk through our doors every year. There are eleven hundred gangs in LA County and 86,000 gang members. Or thereabouts. But we run seven businesses where rival enemy gang members work side by side with each other. About 10,000 laser, tattoo removal treatments are offered every year. Along with mental health, case management, training, anger management, parenting, domestic violence counseling and the like.

Gang violence, of course, is about a lethal absence of hope. And so Homeboy Industries wants to offer a palpable sense of community in the hope that that will trump gang. And so we're sort of an exit ramp off this crazy freeway of gang involvement. And unless we have a way for folks to kind of redirect their lives, it becomes futile. Everybody who walks through the doors at Homeboy Industries obviously has been impacted by violence in their history and in their childhood. And the hope is to invite them to be able to transform their pain so that they can cease to transmit it. And so we have to offer hope to kids, especially in the inner city. Kids who plan their funerals and not their futures.

And so my hope for this committee is that we will have a high degree of reverence for how complex this issue is. And then we're more likely, I think, to embrace solutions that can meet it. And I feel greatly privileged to be a part of this.

*Tony Taguba:*

Good morning everybody. Everybody looks like somber out there. I didn't see any coffee cups rattling in the courtroom. My name is

Tony Taguba. I'm a retired Army soldier. And prior to my retirement I had the privilege of working through a lot of similar programs that we have in the civilian community. Most importantly on domestic violence policy, the development of those policy and the rules that have led to legislation. I was also involved in family advocacy programs and also in the development of child abuse services through our community.

So hopefully I'll be able to contribute a little bit of my experience to the work of the task force. And I want to thank the Attorney General for appointment me to the task force. Thanks very much.

*Sharon Cooper:*

Good morning. My name is Dr. Sharon Cooper. I'm a developmental and forensic pediatrician from North Carolina. I'm a consultant to the National Center for Missing and Exploited children where I've worked for the last 14 years in helping us all to understand violence in cyberspace. In addition, I am the chairperson of our child homicide and identification and prevention task force in the county in North Carolina that has the highest child homicide rate in the state of North Carolina.

And so I'm very honored to participate in this opportunity and I'm very eager to be able to bring to the table hopefully the words of children who have been victims from this perspective. And I would like to thank Attorney General Holder for this opportunity. Thank you.

*D. Tilton Durfee:*

Good morning. I'm **Deanne Tilton Durfee**. And I'm executive director of the Los Angeles County Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect. I also chair the National Center on Child Fatality Review. And I was the final and past chair of the United States Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect. I've been in the field of child abuse for about four decades starting as a social worker and then an administrator. When I joined ICCAN, it became clear that one agency cannot solve this problem. And as we started with 9 agencies, we grew to 32. And each of those agencies actively participates in the work that we do in our 20 task forces and committees. And we have two big conferences. One that the Attorney General has spoken at called Nexus. The effects of violence in the home on children. And a new one the traumatic grief and loss of children.

So these issues are extremely important to me. Only thinking about that toddler and that baby listening to parents scream and

yell at each other and then the father shoots the mother. And then somebody comes out to rescue the baby. Not because they heard it cry, but because they heard the gunshot. And then the baby starts a cycle of foster care. Maybe 30, 40 different homes. And then at the end, we're trying to deal with what Father Greg Boyle is dealing with.

And so thank you so much, Attorney General Eric Holder. I know how many years you have been focused on this issue and dedicated to it. And it is so unique and so incredibly important to the children of this country. Thank you.

*Robert Macy:*

Good morning. I'm Robert Macy. Thank you to all of you for giving a day in your lives to be here. Thank you, Attorney General, for convening this and supporting this. I'm with a section of disaster medicine at Harvard Medical School. And the division of disaster resilience. I also founded and co direct The International Center for Disaster Resilience, which has over the last 15 years, worked with 720,000 \_\_\_\_\_ exposed to violence \_\_\_\_\_ children in 17 countries and 12 states. What we are – I'm a clinical psychologist and a practicing researcher. What we found, both experientially in the field and from our research, is that there is excellent, excellent opportunity for us to prevent violence without suppressing it. To create interventions that actually allow children to move out of the cycle of violence. That's the good news.

The challenging news, which I think the Attorney General said we will prevail, is that we are going to have to tackle structural racism, trans generational impoverishment and, in my view as a researcher, trans generational enslavement. I think we can do that. And, again, I appreciate the opportunity to be part of this panel.

*Georgina Mendoza:*

Good morning. My name is Georgina Mendoza. And I am the senior deputy city attorney and community safety director for the Salinas, California. That's in Monterrey County about two hours south of San Francisco. One of the main things that we are working on is preventing and reducing gang and youth violence in our city. Our city is mostly Latino. And our gangs are the \_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ or Northerners and Southerners. And one of the ways that we are looking to reduce and prevent our gang and youth violence is through a coordinated and comprehensive approach. Specifically, we believe that prevention, intervention, enforcement

and reentry are absolutely critical to work simultaneously if we're gonna have a significant and long lasting impact.

I am also a designed site leader for the California \_\_\_\_ Gang Prevention Network, as well as the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, which is a White House initiative. I am deeply honored to be part of this task force. And I want to thank the Attorney General Holder and all of you for being here. I look forward to learning more. To hearing about strategies and recommendations that have proven to be successful and that can be used to work as a model perhaps for the rest of the nation, state and local levels. Once again, thank you very much.

*Sarah Deer:*

Good morning. Thank you very much for this opportunity. My name is Sarah Deer and I am an assistant professor of law at William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul, Minnesota. I'm also a citizen of the Muscogee Creek Nation. And most of my work has looked at the intersection of tribal issues and victim issues. I'm particularly interested in domestic violence and children exposed to domestic violence, the intersection of domestic violence and child abuse. But more specifically, the concern that Indian reservations have the highest rate of crime, of violent crime in the United States.

So I'm looking to consider both rural and tribal issues as the task force moves forward. And I am deeply grateful for the opportunity and for the chance to work with the department on this issue. And I'm particularly grateful to the survivors of violence who will be speaking to us over the next year. And I hope that you know that your words are as vital as any academic or any physician. We need to hear from you. So than you very much.

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.:* Thank you, again, Attorney General Holder, for your focus on the epidemic of children's exposure to violence. It is an honor to serve on your national task force on children exposed to violence. As you noted, childhood victimization can have long lasting effects. One of which is higher risk of juvenile delinquency and adult criminal behavior.

We are living in an era in which homicide is the leading cause of death for African American youth and the second leading cause of death for all youth. Entire communities are engulfed with violence. In Detroit, for example, which is 20 miles from my hometown, there are more homicides between 2003 and 2010 than

there were US troops killed in Afghanistan in the same time period. More deaths by homicide in one American city than US casualties in a war zone.

Baltimore children are eight times as likely to die from homicide as kids nationwide. Boys and girls in the juvenile justice system often experience violence and victimization before they get into the system. And they may continue to experience violence while they are in the system, compounding the effects. The juvenile justice system is a critical point in the school to prison pipeline, one that we can use as an opportunity to intervene and to provide rehabilitative interventions that encourage healing for children who are repeating the very same cycle of violence that they observed in their homes, in the schools and in the communities.

The federal advisory committee on Juvenile Justice has recommended diversion programs as a major policy alternative. The McArthur Foundation will soon complete and publish its manual on diversion policy. We have to look for opportunities to identify youth who are experiencing or witnessing violence and provide them, as Dr. Marans noted, with – and their families with the kinds of resources and supports that will help them.

I am honored, again, to be co-chair of this task force and part of the extraordinary effort it represents. We recognize that our goal is to identify ways to prevent children's exposure to violence and reduce its negative effects. As a group, we look forward to hearing today from those impacted by violence and from experts in the field as a first step in identifying solutions.

*Joe Torre:*

Thank you, Robert. Good morning. When I started – when we started our foundation, I remember getting people to be interested in what we were doing, I talked about domestic violence. They kept saying, “Oh, it's a woman's issue. It's a woman's issue.” Attorney General Holder, I want to thank you for keeping the issue of addressing children's exposure to violence as a top priority. It's so important.

Every year many children are affected by some form of violence. Over 3 million of them experience it in their own homes. There is no worse emotion than fear. Me, personally, I was never physically abused. But the fear that my dad brought to my house in abusing my mom was very personal, very real. Being the youngest of five children, my older siblings tried to keep it from

me. And there was a lot of whispering going on cause there was a big gap between my age and my next oldest. And it was the whispering that went on that I felt that I had done something wrong. It was just a weird feeling. I mean I did witness my dad, cause he was a police officer, you know threatening my mom with a gun. As I say, he never physically abused me, but I saw the results of what he did to my mom. I used to come home from school, walk home from school in the afternoon, if his car was in front of the house I would go to a friend's house until he left for work.

I was embarrassed to share my feelings because I thought that I was the only one in the neighborhood or the only one anywhere that had this going on in their home. In fact, when we started our foundation I had friends that I grew up with that knew nothing about it and were very surprised about the revelation once I started talking about it.

Kids need to know that violence isn't a secret that they have to keep. We have to speak up for them and help them speak up for themselves. We know that witnessing violence between one's parents or caretakers is the strongest risk factor of transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next. We know some kids get through these situations without continuing the cycle and some kids can find an escape but others do not. And we need to help them find a way through this.

I was very fortunate. I had the ability to play baseball. So I had a place to hide. I had a place that made me feel good about myself. But believe it or not, I mean I carried this in to my adult life. And I really didn't discover about connecting the dots with my fears and my lack of self-esteem – I didn't really face that or get that understanding until probably 1995. And at that point in my I realized that I needed to talk about this issue. Some things that I certainly have kept a secret my whole life, even, you know from my wife. So I was lucky. I had that ability to escape.

The children are our treasure. They are – I mean they're our leaders of the future. These youngsters need to be tended to and be helped. And as a society, whatever it is we can do to reach the kids who are living fear and make their lives safe, it's our obligation to do that. To let each child have a safe place, a safe home to go to. That is what spells success. And I can't tell you how, you know privileged I am to serve on this task force. I feel,

especially someone who's in public life and have phone calls returned when you leave a message, that it's our responsibility to really address this –

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- issue because it's so vitally important for us to do. And, again, I want to thank Attorney General Holder for that.

I'm gonna introduce our first panel, which is called Voices, Experiencing Children's Exposure to Violence. Young people who experience and witness violence are at particular risk for lasting physical, mental and emotional harm. But also have the capacity for healing and transformation. In this panel, we will hear from members of the greater Baltimore community who have endured and survived various forms of childhood exposure to violence, sexual abuse, domestic violence and community violence. We are honored that they have chosen to share their personal stories with us to illuminate the cost of CEV for children and communities, as well as the signposts for resiliency.

I would like to introduce our panelists right now. **Earl Elamin** is a resident Imam of Muslim Community Cultural Center of Baltimore. As a community elder, Elamin will speak about the rise in community violence in Baltimore over the course of his lifetime. With a special emphasis on the change in the economic landscape that gave rise to high rates of male unemployment and the related rise of inter community violence. He will describe coming of age rituals his organization offers young people who are exposed to violence in his community.

Next would be Ms. **Rose Alma**. She's a survivor of domestic violence. She will speak about recently prosecuting her husband for domestic violence against both her and her children when her children sought to protect her.

Ms. Jacqueline Kuhn. She was sexually abused as a child and as an adult found herself in an abusive intimate relationship. She will speak about how she is healing from these patterns in her own life through educating others about detecting and preventing child sexual abuse.

Earl Amin, Earl Elamin.

*Earl Elamin:* Good morning, co-chairs, task force members. As he said, I am Imam Earl Elamin and I'm a lifetime resident here in Baltimore City. Noted leader in the Muslim community. And I guess for over the last 30, 25 years I've served in various capacities of leadership in the Muslim community, but also in the community at large. I've participated in very historic meetings with Pope John Paul and the Lady \_\_\_\_\_ Muhammad. And also to help facilitate the first historic \_\_\_\_\_ between Imams and Rabbis in North America in New York City three years ago.

I also serve as vice president for the National Center of Institutions in Alternatives, which started in 1977. I've been on and off with them for the last 20 years maybe. And it has been involved in the juvenile in the criminal justice system. We employ 650 people. Thirty which are ex-offenders – 30 percent which are ex-offenders. I have been a two way talk show host. WEA Morgan State University. I worked at the Baltimore Urban League as the director of family and children's services running a youth diversion program that was very, very successful.

And I was the independent juvenile justice monitor in the Glen Denning administration here in the state of Maryland. My father used to say, he said, "Before you speak, son." He said, "Qualify yourself." And so I guess I'm a little nervous, but I'm not. I've always served as a lead off hitter when I was on my college team, so I always batted first, Mr. Torre. So I guess I'm batting first again. And was a good centerfielder too. Darn good one.

*Joe Torre:* I bet you can \_\_\_\_\_ a little bit too.

*Earl Elamin:* I got to Lakeland, Florida. But I will begin my testimony with a very simple, but I think profound statement. What you see is not what you get. What you see is what gets you. Our youth's inability to fight off the persistent images and acts of violence, be they physical, sexual, gang related, school based and/or community centered, is paramount to many of the problems we see in this society. Even though those who are not perpetrators or direct victims of violence, still experience this daily. It is ubiquitous. Reaching every facet of society, permeating our communities and schools, persistently displayed through media and television and overtly esteemed in sports.

For example, in both football and basketball, the greater aggression and violence leads to a higher or greater applause. The harder you

hit a person or make a tackle in football, the more applause you get on that play. Similarly, the most revered play in basketball is the slam dunk. And, of course, the harder the dunk or the more violent the dunk, the better the dunk is considered.

It is a conflicting message for our young people and most can't make sense of it. I happened to look at yesterday the XBOX and what they're promoting. I don't know if I could watch that stuff for 25 minutes and not be affected by it.

So it permeates our society. But here in Baltimore City, growing up here, being raised here, the loss of jobs and the breakdown of community, influx of drugs and the lack of fathers in the home also drive many issues related to community violence here in Baltimore. Even though the city has produced many great minds, from \_\_\_\_ Blake to Thurgood Marshall, Cab Calloway, Dr. Carson, Benjamin Carson, and I could go on and on. Some that I've grown up with in my 60 years on this planet.

This city is very much a blue collar city and historically, education has not been premium for a large portion of the African American community. See, there was a time when you didn't have to get a high school diploma here. You could earn good money working in the steel mills here. Bethlehem Steel. Coopers. General Electric. Western Electric, etcetera. Those places. Defense industry. So men that migrated from the South, from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, looking for a better life, wanting to establish their families, worked as laborers, unskilled laborers in the steel mills, and also in the shipyards.

This allowed men to present positive fixtures and role models within their homes and their communities. When we study the migratory patterns here in Baltimore, you could come from Kinston, North Carolina, reside in the twelve hundred block of Eagle Street and all of those folks that came from Kinston, North Carolina resided in the twelve hundred block of Eagle Street. They were related and they weren't related. But they married into one another's families. And so they established strong profound sense of pride and community.

Well, the ensuing decline in defense industry and the steel industry going to Japan changed this. Now the largest employer in Baltimore metropolitan area is the Johns Hopkins Healthcare. So the paradigm has shifted from men to women. Although, you

know life wasn't perfect in these neighborhoods and totally free of violence during the era described I'm talking about, most of the city's communities were functional. The migrants from similar regions of the South worked, married, formed families. This happens, not only in Baltimore, Washington, Philadelphia, New York, Hartford. All up and down the East Coast and in your major cities throughout the United States of America. But there was an interconnectedness between the people.

You know the change in Baltimore, you know after the riots there was a change. The urban flight took place. Many of these east and west Baltimore families went out of the city. The closure of the steel mills, as I said. And the drug trade. Influx of drug in \_\_\_\_\_ neighborhood violence with young boys. The Rockefeller Law, which allowed – which now adults were no longer involved in the drug trade so they handed it off to the young children who couldn't cope with it. And the drug trade we saw became very, very violent. This idea of making quick money in a society that preaches immediate gratification. You know instant coffee, instant potatoes, pop, pop, fizz, fizz, oh, what a relief it is. All those things speak to the psyche of a young child, as well as adults here in the society.

So this dream has played out with these young children. Now we see a city, and I think it was portrayed by – many of you watch *The Wire*, the series of *The Wire*. And it was portrayed in *The Wire* in many instances. A city that has been dismantled by the drug trade and the violence that these children are participating in.

Now I want to get to this because, you know you have the gangs. You have the rise of the gangs. But all of this is a result of what we call in our organization the ADC. The absent daddy club. And this absent daddy club is now what you see gangs and what you see this whole violence. If you don't see a man, you can't be a man. In order to be a man, you have to see a man. Because as I said, what you see is not what you get. What you see is what gets you. And that can be on the negative, but it also can be on the positive.

So this city now, a group of people have gotten together. We have formed coalitions, be they religious coalitions, interfaith coalitions, but also community based coalitions. And many years ago, in 1987, '88, we established The Rights of Passage Programs for young boys and young girls. And so we expose children to

different environments. We believe that if you expose you can inspire. So children are exposed outside of these violent environment in which they are in.

These young people are young people. They easily – they're impressed upon a lot of things. Right now we hope and pray that we can establish an environment that is peace for these children. That is a peaceful environment. We have to know what peace is for ourselves before we can show children. A lot of this is a lot of anger that we see.

So with this Rights of Passage, bringing the young boys and the young girls from boyhood to manhood, from girlhood to womanhood, these programs are designed to evolve them so that they can become, make a positive contribution. There are many, many organizations out there in the Baltimore City metropolitan area that are doing great work. It's not feasible, we're not gonna get a pat on the back. We're doing this because we're supposed to do this. We have put billboards, we have put on the back of cars, on bumper stickers. And it's just one saying. And the saying is, our community, our responsibility. We also believe that words make people. And when people receive that, they understand that it's our community, it's our responsibility.

So I close with this. I'd like to say that we have a tough job ahead, but as Mr. Holder stated, it's not insurmountable. You don't know how strong you are until you go up against something that is strong. And so we believe that we can overcome this because truth always prevails over falsehood. Thank you very much and may god bless us in our endeavors.

*Joe Torre:* Thank you very much. Ms. Alma.

*Rose Alma:* Hi, my name is Rose Alma. I moved here from – to Maryland from New Jersey about 4 ½ years ago because my husband's job. I have two beautiful children – Freddy, who's ten, and Brianna, who's nine. When I first met my husband, he swept me off my feet. He was charming, loving, generous and he was a total gentleman. I felt very protected. We had a beautiful wedding and a great marriage in the beginning.

Things started changing as times went on. I started to realize he had a huge anger problem. He would punch doors and throw objects when he was mad. After our son was born, his anger

increased. While I was in the hospital after my C section, Fred was going back and forth to the hospital. And on one of his trips a kid ran into the back of his car. And he got out of his car and he punched the kid in the face. There was a witness. And the kid pressed charges. And Fred got off because we always had a friend or a family member who was a lawyer. That really scared me. Because when he came to the hospital to tell me I got scared. I told him that I needed him and I was scared that he would go to jail or something for punching this kid in the face.

He called me a bitch so much that my one year old son learned to call me a bitch. And he called me a bitch often. Shortly after my son was born I found out that – I knew he was married before and it was only for five months. But I found out that he also assaulted his ex-wife. I found a warrant for his arrest that I didn't know about until then.

On December 2005, Fred was on his Christmas break from work. We got into an argument and he came after me and he grabbed my neck. I left the house with my two children for four days and went down to my sister's house that was 45 minutes away. I wouldn't come home until Fred made an appointment to see an anger management doctor. He kept calling me and calling me and apologizing, begging me to come home and I wouldn't until he did that. He did go to a few sessions, but that did not help.

He would stand over me when he was angry many times with a fist. And just stand over me. He's much bigger than me, so it really scared me. In 2009 things were not getting better with Fred and I. Marriage counseling didn't help. I told him I wanted a divorce. He told me he would kill me and put a knife in my head. He called me a fat whore, an ugly bitch, a cunt and many horrible names. A couple of days later I got a protective order. In November we decided to work things out for the sake of our children and I dropped the protective order.

He became abusive towards the children. February 2010, Brianna hurt my son Freddy when they were fighting. Fred got angry and took her by the hair and dragged her across the house. That resulted in a bald spot. He apologized to her, but I know my daughter will be scared for life because of this. I was afraid to contact the police cause I thought he would get in trouble. He often slammed my son on the couch also when he got angry.

The final straw was on May 10, I'm sorry, May 12, 2011, Fred got angry because I was trying to leave the house with the kids. He took my laptop from my arms and slammed it on the floor. I tried to call 911 with my cell phone, but he snatched the phone away from me. My son handed me the house phone. Fred threw me on the ground by my hair and started punching and hitting me. My kids witnessed this horrible abuse. They were screaming and crying. I never thought he would do this in front of my kids. If the kids hadn't been there, he probably would have killed me. He lost total control.

Each day I pray for Fred to get the help that he needs to control his anger problem. I never want him to hurt my kids again. My husband is not the man he pretended to be. One of my old coworkers that was good friends with him back in New Jersey warned me that it was all a façade. He had everybody fooled, including both of our families. His father told me he played football in high school to channel his anger.

I also was shocked when I was in court after I filed charges that his mother got on the stand and lied to protect her son. Not only has she let me down, his sister sent me texts that included cursing also. Every day I have to look over my shoulder when I am alone. Fred took away the only thing that brought peace to us. He stopped paying the alarm bill. My son makes sure most of the nights and asks me if I put the alarm on. He's afraid to sleep with the light off also.

Fred did not have a criminal record because he has attended anger management programs. He has only gotten probation in the past and has had his record expunged. At Fred's sentencing, I asked the court to let this stay with him so he can be held accountable this time around. I also asked that the restraining order remain permanent for the rest of my life. The judge only gave him supervised probation. He also cannot touch me or come near me for five years.

I also asked that he not be allowed to contact me, only through email or text, concerning our children. I want to get on with my life, and perhaps find happiness one day. Through prayer, counseling and the support of our loved ones, hopefully my children and I will get there. Thank you for listening to my testimony. I hope that it is helpful in your work in protecting children from the many forms of violence they experience.

I'm actually a realtor for Long and Foster now. But after being here and having the honor to be here, I would definitely see – I could see myself helping women and children in the same – that have gone through the same experience that I have gone through. Thank you.

*Joe Torre:*

Thank you, Ms. Alma. Very brave. Ms. Kuhn.

*Jacqueline Kuhn:*

Good morning. My name is Jacqueline Kuhn. I am 38 years old and I am a survivor of child sexual abuse. My abuse began when I was five. At the time, my family lived in a small Michigan town called **Kessidy**. My abuser was a teenage boy who lived next door to us. He would take me alone up into a tree house that was in the yard behind ours.

At first, he just laid down on top of me during our game play and simulated sex with our clothes on. Of course, at such a young age and never having been talked to about sex, I didn't know what sex was. So this type of play was confusing. But then the abuse escalated to fondling and other acts of sex.

I know a lot of people wonder why kids don't tell when this is happening to them. But people need to understand that child molesters are masters of manipulation. And they know what to say to make sure their victims never tell.

First he threatened me. He told me if I told anyone or stopped letting him abuse me he would bring my older brother or my younger sister up to the tree house and do worse things to them. Then he made me feel ashamed. He told me if I didn't like what was happening I would not keep coming outside to play with my friends. Then he convinced me that I'd be the one to get in trouble.

When I did finally get brave and threatened him that I would tell my father and that he would go to jail for the bad things he was doing to me, he laughed and told me that I was doing the same bad things and I would be the one to go to jail because my father would be angry with me that I hadn't told him earlier.

One of the most important parts of my story that I like to share with people is that my father was a Michigan state trooper. Many nights there was a police car parked in front of my house and my father would come in his uniform carrying his badge and his gun.

If that won't keep a child molester at bay, what will? If I felt as though I could not tell my father, who was a police officer at the time, what was happening to me, why would anyone question children who don't tell who don't have police officers as fathers?

My abuse only ended when I was seven years old because my father was transferred to a new post within the state of Michigan and we moved. I never told my family about my abuse until just recently, after I turned 30 and after I went through a very painful divorce from a man I was married to for 10 plus years who also abused me. He knew about my abusive past and made me feel as if I wasn't good enough in our bedroom because of some emotional or psychological issues I was trying to work through during our marriage. Instead of loving me through any problems I might have been struggling through, he abused me by carrying on extramarital affairs with many different women and treating me at times as if I were a paid performer for him in our bedroom. He even got a vasectomy so that he could sleep with other women without wearing a condom or worrying about unplanned pregnancies, endangering my health and my safety.

It was during my marriage that my go to personal defense mechanism, perfectionism, or at least the illusion of it, was at its strongest. I had gone back to school to finish a bachelor's degree, and when I entered the intensive accelerated academic program, I booked a full time class load every semester and worked full time as well. I made it my goal to achieve a 4.0 GPA. And I remember during my second to last semester weeping because I thought I might receive an A- instead of an A and this would ruin my hopes of finishing with a perfect grade point average. But I did it. I earned that 4.0.

But the funny thing about academic records is that they don't equate to good grades on the report card of life. In that department I failed way more than once. I've been divorced, laid off and fired from jobs, and it's always been a struggle to build solid friendships that last for more than a few years. As a survivor of child sexual abuse, I struggle with every personal relationship that I have.

Before I ended my marriage I made appointments for marriage counseling, to which my ex-husband never showed up. But this actually turned out to be a good thing for me, because I needed counseling for my own struggles and issues. It was during these

sessions that I figured out I needed to tell my family about the sexual abuse I suffered through as a child.

I think a part of me was scared that my parents wouldn't believe me. Another part of me was scared that they would downplay my abuse and not care that it happened but instead just tell me to get over it because I'm an adult now. That's the same fear that every survivor faces. The fear of wondering if anyone really cares about you, including your own family. We always fear rejection.

I'm working on trusting people enough to love me for who I am now. Because I was five years old and I had sex forced on me, I was made to feel as though I were a throwaway. Someone who doesn't matter. Someone who has no worth or value in the eyes of others. Some days I'm still that five year old girl.

That's how powerful the shame and guilt can be for a victim who doesn't get help through treatment and community support when he or she is still in that stage of being a victim. Without reporting their abuse and receiving acceptance, support and empowerment from a caring community that surrounds them, victims end up with lives much like mine. Where they continue to be abused in different relationships and even abuse themselves.

That's why I began volunteering my time and talents with Adam Rosenberg, the executive director of Baltimore Child Abuse Center and his dedicated staff in March of this year. Baltimore Child Abuse Center, or BCAC, is a nonprofit agency that performs crucial work in the lives of child sexual abuse victims in Baltimore. Not only does BCAC conduct forensic interviews for child victims in a safe child centered non threatening environment, but it also provides advocacy services for victims and their families.

I also designed the butterfly mosaic mural you can see in BCAC's family waiting room. The mural is called Life After Abuse. And it's there to symbolize the hope for healing in every victim and survivor of child sexual abuse. As a survivor, to be able to see myself in the reflected mirrors or one of those butterflies and know that I am on a path of healing, self-expression and beauty, is a very powerful thing. And to know it's because so many people in the community banded together to work on this mosaic, putting broken pieces of tile that symbolize the broken pieces of my life and the lives of all sexual abuse victims, together in a way that makes

sense and creates a beautiful picture from something that happened that didn't make any sense and was extremely ugly. Knowing that has taught me just how valuable I am. Nearly 100 community volunteers put in almost 40 hours of work to help me put together that beautiful mural.

I'm also currently working with many talented creative people in Baltimore, including musicians, songwriters, poets and visual artists to develop a creative expression program to encourage healing in abuse victims. By using a variety of creative art forms, it's my hope that child victims of sexual abuse and adult survivors will learn to heal and trust and find their voice.

I will continue to promote BCAC and continue to work with the prevention coordinator at BCAC to tell my story to help parents and educators recognize signs of sexual abuse and know how to respond appropriately. This way I feel like I won't be wasting my life and my passion for spreading hope to victims and survivors and for helping to prevent this crime from happening to more children.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today and be a part of this important task force. And I hope my story and the work I'm doing inspires others to embrace victims and survivors of child sexual abuse to help them heal.

*Joe Torre:* Thank you very much. This is a period where we will have questions.

*Georgina Mendoza:* Thank you all very much for sharing your personal stories it's exactly the type of information that we as a task force need to hear and it's important for us to hear. Ms. Kuhn, I did have a question for you. What could have helped you as a child to tell your parents or some other trusted adult about what you were living through?

*Jacqueline Kuhn:* Empowerment. I think that parents labor under the delusion that the schools are teaching their children about what are appropriate touches, what is safe and unsafe. And I think at the same time schools are laboring under the delusion that parents are teaching their children. And this is a message that needs to be reinforced constantly with children. To own their bodies and that those bodies belong to them and nobody should be touching them. I think if I had been taught that and if I had been taught the correct

anatomical name for my body parts, I would have felt safer in telling somebody.

*Georgina Mendoza:* Thank you.

*Steve Marans:* I want to thank the witnesses very much for your testimony this morning. I just wanted to say \_\_\_\_\_. I hope you know \_\_\_\_\_ experienced as a child was \_\_\_\_\_ with way too many feelings. And I'm glad that you're not alone and I'm glad you're here today.

I did have one question, Ms. Alma, when you were talking about your experiences and how really chillingly horrific they were, and, again, thank you for sharing with us. I did want to know at any point in terms of your feeling and being physically threatened whether there was any place, any agency, police or otherwise, to whom you felt you could turn for any reliable protection?

*Rose Alma:* I did contact the Department of Social Services for one of the times when my husband spanked my daughter. And he was scaring my children. But they simply said that it was not against the law to spank your child in Maryland unless you leave a mark. So I was kind of crying out for help then, and I felt like they didn't do what they were supposed to to protect me. And then, you know a few months later he dragged my daughter across the house by her hair. I don't think that they responded. Even when I did report, which was a few months after about when he did drag my daughter. Again, I showed them – I took pictures of her bald spot and I showed him the clump of hair on the counter. And the detective, he just he said, "I don't want to make you feel like this is not important, but I have far more other cases where children's arms are broken or," you know in a sense that her – what he did to her wasn't as important sort of. So that kind of disappointed me.

And I want to touch on that. And I didn't tell \_\_\_\_\_ this, but I was also abused as a child. My grandfather molested me when I was seven years old. And my family actually, we were at my grandmother's house in Long Island. And my sister went down cause she heard something going on. She was also in the room. The lights were out. And she called my grandmother up. And my grandmother turned on the lights and she was so angry. She started kicking me while I was on the ground and asking what was going on. I just remember the whole family getting together and it was – and to this day to me it seems a little twisted. But they said

we were gonna forgive and forget. And my parents, they never knew about it. I only told my father about it when – it was when my sister was pregnant or just had her son, who's now 21. And it was on the way back from the hospital that I finally told my father. And he was upset that I'd never told him. Had told him when I was a child. But I was afraid of our family breaking up and, you know causing problems for the whole family. But to touch on that, yeah. I kind of went through the same thing too. So I'm sure that affects me too in some of my relationships also as an adult. But I am getting counseling to help me deal with that also.

*Robert Macy:* Thank you, Ms. Alma. Thank you, Ms. Kuhn. Thank you. Thank you for your courage and for your self-respect and for your willingness to empower us. I have a question maybe for each of you, for Ms. Kuhn and Ms. Alma. Given the story, the narrative and what you've seen and how you've continued and not quit and not given up, can you help us as a task force understand what it is that kept you going? What it is that allowed you to get to this place today? Where you're sitting before us trying to help.

*Jacqueline Kuhn:* Well, I think for me it was definitely my faith community. Having personal faith in God and having a relationship like that definitely helped me. Being able to recognize that there's a being who is perfect love and truth helped. But also learning to share my story and talk about it is very important. If I stay silent, then I just contribute to the stigma and shame that's associated with sexual abuse. When I break that silence, I help break the cycle of abuse.

*Robert Macy:* Thank you.

*Rose Alma:* And with me through counseling and I talk to my children all the time. They keep me going. I mean through the abuse of my husband, the molesting when I was child, they keep me going. I mean they – just knowing that, you know they have me. That's all they really have to protect them. My family's very supportive. Right now I'm just happy that I'm in my house. Not walking on eggshells anymore. I feel like I'm surrounded by love and support. And I have – I go to church. I pray. I ask God to have me in his favor every day. That's what I do to help me get through it.

*Robert Macy:* Thank you.

*Greg Boyle:* Again, I want to add my voice of gratitude. It's enormously helpful to have the three of you here at this time. Rosa, I want to

ask, how difficult or frustrating or easy was it to get a restraining order, a protective order? Was that a fast, difficult?

*Rose Alma:*

Well, the first time it was. I remember going down and getting one and the girl wasn't so helpful. She – it was not a good experience. No, actually this is the second time. I had two restraining orders. The second time it was – I guess I got there around midnight after the attack. And the girl was – I was frazzled to begin with. My neighbor came with me. And she didn't tell me not to write on the front and back of the sheet and she had me rewrite it. She was just being not nice. That made it even – it made me want to leave cause I was just so frustrated. But I guess it was kind of easy. I kind of knew what to do the second time because the first time also I had a lawyer that worked – I worked downtown. And his office was next to mine and he kind of told me. I told him what I was going through. And the abuse. And he kind of told me what I should or where I should go to. Like that night. He said if you ever have a problem again and it's after hours, go straight to the commissioner's office at the courthouse. At least I knew where to go the second time. The first time it was – I don't believe it was that long ago. The second time is definitely more fresh in my mind. The first time I don't remember having such a problem getting it. But.

*Sharon Cooper:*

I have a question for \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_. Do you feel that the Rights of Passage \_\_\_\_\_, do you feel that the Rights of Passage model is one that other interfaith communities can take on? And how could we, how could the task force encourage the faith community to recognize boys, in particular, as being the most common perpetrators of the types of violence that we're seeing and that children are exposed to?

*Earl Elamin:*

Well, one of the things, I think this wasn't in the context of religious. It was community based. So our group, the African American Men's Leadership Institute, when we started it was a myriad of men from different faith persuasions. Some that, you know had limited. But they understood the need. The other thing was I don't want to eliminate the young ladies. Because what we're seeing in the last, and my wife just happens to be the head of the girls juvenile services here in Baltimore City. So we're seeing an inordinate amount of girls coming through the system with violence. Perpetrators of violence. And recipients of violence. So we want to – we think that the best way is it doesn't necessarily have – it has to be a model that is predicated on showing young

people what it is to be a responsible individual. You know we always say we got to get back to what is human. What do human beings do? I mean what are human beings. How do we define humans? What is human and how do we define human beings? What do human beings do?

So we want to provide them environments where we can see people that are flourishing and so that the children can see that. And a lot of them incorporate that. They want to do some other things. So the Rights is loving, but it's also intense. And you go through different stages in your evolution from boyhood to manhood. As a man at my age, I'm still evolving. It's ongoing. All of us are still evolving in our evolution as men and women. So yeah, we would encourage you to support that. I heard there was a lot of interest around the diversion. And I think the diversion is very important. Having run a program at the Baltimore Urban League, that's very important also. With a family advocacy model. With a family advocacy model. Johnny can come to you for counseling every day, but if he goes into a dysfunctional environment every day you're back at square one every time he comes back. So there has to be an involvement with significant others and the family model that allows everyone to be involved in this process. Even in the Rights process it has to be. The parents or the significant others have to buy in to this also in order for it to be successful.

*Tony Taguba:*

First of all – am I on? Thanks very much for coming before the task force. It really \_\_\_\_\_ - to know that there's problems out there that some folks have not been helped. But for you, Imam, you've got an enduring mission here of trying to reduce inner city violence. And for the most part, a lot of this stuff takes a lot of resources to provide. Harnessing the energy. And, of course, in our times of environmental, the conditions in our community, social programs are the first to get cut. No matter where you go. Because they're rather soft. And in your context or in the context of what you're doing today, could you somewhat highlight the types of resources you're getting and the kinds of resources you're not getting to marry success in propagating this Rights of Passage that you're doing today? And how do we improve the lives of our youngsters to have a very productive life?

*Earl Elamin:*

We started out, and in many instances, it came out of our pockets. To be honest with you. It was a community based initiative. A few years later it just so happened that we were fortunate to receive

some funding from a foundation. Will Smith and Jada Smith. It just so happened that her aunt graduated from high school with me and she was the head of the foundation. I mean, you know but we haven't received a ton of money from municipalities and government agencies. Just private funding from people who have bought into what we're doing. And then just going in your own pockets. There are a lot of these programs are being run by people that are just committed to doing what they're doing. And they see that what they've scarified on the front end, on the back end, that it'll be productive for them.

And so, I mean I guess it's a matter of, you know in many instances it's something else. I think a gentleman later on from Johns Hopkins, Dr. **Leif**, will speak to this also. Hopefully he will. I think he's still here. But in many instances of lot of these people have the desire to work in community. And the barriers that are there for them to receive types of funding, it's so difficult for them to receive the funding because they don't have an accountant or they don't have a grant writer. They don't have these things. So consequently, many of the programs that are being funded are not necessarily the best programs. They just have the best grant writers and the best accountants. You see?

So what is happening here on many fronts that the people that are really sincere about what they're doing, they're not getting that opportunity with enough resources to really, really, really make a profound impact. They're doing great stuff. But they could really make a profound impact if, in fact, they were given this opportunity or they were given people with the expertise to help them to work through this process when they are trying to acquire these funds that, you know like the Justice Department. When you open up a package, a RFP or what? It's that thick. And so, you know it's dedicated individuals says, "Hey, man, we can't do this. We can't do this." So in some avenues that people have been supportive, like the Violence Prevention Program at Hopkins, they've been very supportive with these types of situations.

But in other instances, these people, they don't give up, but they just say, "Hey, I'm not going through it. We're gonna do it like we can do it." We'll piecemeal it and we're gonna go forward. And we put our trust in God.

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.* Imam, if I could follow up on that area of concern. The gentleman sitting behind you is the acting administrator of the Office of

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. He's the guy who sends out those big thick RFPs.

*[Laughter]*

I just want to say that one of the things that OJJDP focuses on is they look at programs in search of models. And they look at promising approaches and best practices and eventually a model or blueprint that can be developed and used across the nation. And getting to the point where you have a model often involves an evaluation by social scientists who come in.

The Rights of Passages program sounds like the kind of program that would be useful across the nation. The question I would ask is whether there has been anyone so far who has had an opportunity to evaluate the program to look at the structure, determine the referral process and whether it works over the time. When we heard the Attorney General speak earlier, he said, we're looking for what works. We want to get rid of what doesn't work. We want to channel our money into what does work. So have you had an opportunity to have some of the Rights of Passage programs evaluated and what have been the results? I see you shaking your head, so I'm assuming that there's some results.

*Earl Elamin:*

Yes. Throughout the country there was Rights of Passage collective over the years. We started in 1987. I think the first one was here in Baltimore City. And it mushroomed throughout the country. So there are programs throughout the country that are doing the Rights. And they have had folks to come in and look at it and review the program. Over time, I know that some of them were highlighted for the work that they've been able to do. Urban Leadership Institute here in Baltimore City and some other groups, I hope that – is Dr. Leif still here? Dr. Leif could provide you with a lot, a list of all of them that are doing some good work. And they're just not necessarily – it's a Right of Passage, it just doesn't have to be an ethnic model. But it's a model that takes a boy and a girl from boyhood to manhood and girlhood to womanhood. So yeah, they are out there. They are out there.

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.:* If those evaluations could be sent to the task force, I think we would really benefit from that knowledge. Thank you.

*Thea James:*

\_\_\_\_ say, echo what other people have said. I thank all of you for what you have shared with us today. So incredibly brave

and heart wrenching at the same time. I have a question for Imam Elamin. You were just speaking in some, expressing some generalizations about the Rights of Passage program. Could you present for us an example of a specific person who has gone through your program and has benefited from having gone through this and what that might look like?

*Earl Elamin:*

There's a young man – I've got about 50 sons, so it was a young man who started with us when he was 8 years old. He's a grown man. He's married. He's a responsible citizen. He's on one of the boards of the community college here in Baltimore City. He is an attorney. And part of his right of passage was that we had, as I said, we had a two-way talk show for 13 years at Morgan State University. It was dialogue with the African American male. So part of his rights of passage was that he had to do the program once a month. So he has his own program. I mean he's a – so that's someone, I mean at that level.

But we have many a young men that are doing very well in the community, you know that are president of their neighborhood associations. Things of that – when I measure that type of progress, to me that's real progress, you know. He might just have a – it doesn't necessarily mean that's a schoolteacher or a lawyer, but he's a responsible individual in the neighborhood. To me that's the ultimate. That's the ultimate. And he's a model of manhood and fatherhood. To me that's the ultimate.

*D. Tilton Durfee:*

I thank you so much. Each one of you presented eloquently and touched our hearts. I was going to mention, we have a program called Cell Phone Dads in LA. You've probably heard of it. Where kids who don't have a father have someone they can call on the cell phone. And those cell phone dads are available 24/7. Is that something you've incorporated into your program?

*Earl Elamin:*

No, we haven't. I mean I've heard of it, but I haven't – I never researched it. But that would be something that I think would be a good nationwide model.

*[Laughter]*

You see I heard you twice the first time.

*D. Tilton Durfee:*

And the question I have for Rosa and Jacqueline is this. What about the kids? Have they received any kind of grief counseling?

And, in particular, Rosa, you're pretty raw out of your situation. It hasn't been that long. Not even a year. Do you receive the kind of support and is your counseling a group kind of counseling where you have peers, you have other women who have been through a similar situation who you can call on at any point of time in the day or not when you're feeling this – you know incredible reverberation from having been through what you've been through? Plus being a multigenerational victim. There's a lot of open wounds still that I don't think you've had time to heal totally. You're working on it. You look great. You sound great. But I know in the middle of the night there has to be times where you're terrified. And so I'm wondering if you have that kind of support, people you can call on at any time of the day or night. Or if you do, as well.

*Rose Alma:*

I have – I was referred to Turnaround, which is located in Townsend. And it's for victims of domestic violence. And right after the attack last year my kids and I started going. And eventually after a few months they released us or discharged us cause we were doing good. Now that my trial, divorce trial's coming up, next month, the fourteenth and the fifteenth, I think my son, it's affecting him. I started – I had to take him back. And in the past he's – his father has said, like right before we've gone – we've been to court so many times. Postponement after postponement. And one time my ex told my son that he might be going to jail. My son, the next week he said, you know he was mad about something when I was driving him to school and he said he was gonna kill himself. So Turnaround has been great. I would rush him there and they, you know they would work with each of us to help us get through it.

And right now it's tough for me, so I've taken him again. I started going myself because I felt like I was kind of breaking down or. But at night, late night, if it wasn't for my sleeping pills I'd never sleep. So my sleeping pills, I can't be without them. It started back in New Jersey when things started going bad.

But the number one person who has helped me is my sister, **Leticia Selgado**. She is back there. She came from New Jersey to be with me today. She came last night. And if it wasn't for her, I don't know what – I don't know. I probably would have had a mental breakdown. But that's my rock. And she's here today.

*Joe Torre:*

I have a question for, Imam. I have an issue, you know being in the sports business, and you've mentioned it opening up about, you know the hardest hit and the loudest slam gets all the glory. And it is a conflicting message. I don't think there's any question, especially if we, you know have our high school kids go out on a Friday night and the coach is telling me to attack, attack, attack and then they go out on a date later on in the evening and all of the sudden the rules don't apply. But I'm not sure they know that. Do you have a suggestion for just as the social – the thing about the baseball stuff or the football stuff, and it's happening on TV. The one who yells the loudest gets to talk. You know so it's all very consistent. And I know it drives me nuts. But, you know that's about that long of a drive for me. Do you have a suggestion for?

*Earl Elamin:*

I think we live in a society where, and you'll find if we look at it, you'll find when the economy is at its lowest point, then sports are pushed a little harder to the society. It gives them some ease. You know this is spectator society. America is a spectator society. So it gives us a lot of ease to watch these athletes. But I think that we have put too much emphasis, especially in the lower income neighborhoods. I guess when my father was growing up, he told me, and he graduated from college in the 40s. He told me that the avenues for African American men were very small. And it was athletics and entertainment at one period of time. Well, it seems as though we're back there again for men of color. Our boys, all they aspire to be is an athlete or an entertainer again.

And so we have to put an emphasis on what it is to be a good human being. A good man. A good father. It sounds corny, but it's real. I mean, because, as you very well know as someone that's been in professional sports for so, so long, some of these guys live miserable lives. Miserable lives. That's why they're ready to go back to play basketball. They're broke. That's the bottom line.

But we have to put an emphasis on men that are just good men and good fathers. And I don't know how we're going to be able to do that, because the media rules supreme right now. The media highlights those people that sell. And I understand that. But how do we – we have to find a way where we can highlight these so-called ordinary men and women that are doing things day in and day out. You know we do a thing in the neighborhoods all the time. We always highlight those people that are married 10 years, 15, 20, 30, 40, 50 years. They are the people that are staples of the

community. And we tell our young people, “Ask them how they stayed together?” You see. Ask them.

So those types of things have to happen. That’s back to community though. That’s back to real community, real substantive neighborhoods and real substantive communities. And our children have to know that its’ just not a good – that if you don’t make it as an athlete, then you can make it as a banker. You see. As a lawyer. As a schoolteacher. I mean all of this stuff is interrelated. You know. So I don’t know. I mean athletics is big. I looked at a commercial last night and I saw the Baltimore High School team under armors. You know these kids, you know they’re promoting under armor. So I meant it’s big .it’s trickled down. It’s a big business. And I don’t know how to break through. But just be good people. Be good human beings.

*Joe Torre:* Amen from me. I mean, you’re right. The stuff that’s glorified is  
–

*[Begin VTS\_01\_3]*

- necessarily stuff you want to teach in your home. And again, you hit it again that I don’t understand it, but you certainly said you understand it because that’s what sells and that seems to be what’s driving everything. I’d like to have one more question for – yeah, go ahead.

*Jim McDonnell:* And again, thank you for sharing your personal experiences with us. It’s very valuable for us in the task we have before us. Looking back on your own, if we could go maybe to all of you, just briefly on the things that you’ve experienced. And we often learn more from the things that we could have done differently. What’s your takeaway on that? What would you have done differently than you did maybe? And then in the context of the report that we’re looking to prepare, based on your own experiences, what would you like to see included in that report that might have implications on a national basis?

*Jacqueline Kuhn:* I guess I’ll start. Well, I would like to see in your report more support for places like Baltimore Child Abuse Center. Being a nonprofit center that helps children in the Baltimore area who have alleged that they’ve been sexually abused, those kinds of support services are very important. If you can imagine for a child having to talk about that is difficult, but then if they have to go to like 14

different places and talk to 14 different people and their story might change because they feel like if someone keeps asking me this I must be telling it wrong or, you know whatever. That causes a lot of problems. So to have one central place that is non threatening and supportive for children, that's important. And we need more centers like that in our communities. And unfortunately, when they're nonprofit and they don't receive the funding that they need to receive, they can't do all the work that they could do. So I think that's very important.

*Joe Torre:* This was very powerful. I want to thank our panelists. With so informative, powerful, brave testimony and certainly something that we listen to and will continue to go over. I want to thank you very much.

We're gonna take a 15 minute break.

*[Break 2:20 to 4:34]*

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.:* Good morning, folks. We're ready to begin. Good morning, everybody. May I have your attention, please?

*Joe Torre:* We'd like to get the meeting started. If everybody would take their seats, please. Thank you, Carol. Would everybody take their seats? We'd like to reconvene. Thank you.

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.:* Earlier today we were given our call to action by Attorney General Holder. And we've had the benefit of hearing from several individuals with firsthand experience about the impact of violence on them, as individuals, and on children. We now have the pleasure of hearing from several national leaders on how various agencies are working to address the issue of children's exposure to violence. Mr. Nigel Cox is his senior year at Farmville Central High School in North Carolina. He is the chairman of the youth advisory board for Students Against Violence Everywhere, a student driven organization that provides opportunities for youth to learn crime prevention and conflict management skills, as well as the virtues of good citizenship, civility and nonviolence.

Dr. Patrick McCarthy is president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private philanthropy organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. He is a trustee of the Casey Foundation, the

chairman of Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and a director of the Casey Family Services board of advisors.

Ms. **Sonja Sohn** is an actor and activist. She is the founder and CEO of Rewired for Change. She was inspired to start Rewired for Change by her own life's journey, which began as a child growing up in an underserved community in Newport News, Virginia and eventually led to her role as a principal cast member of HBO's *The Wire*.

Mr. Nigel Cox.

*Nigel Cox:*

Good morning. My name is Nigel Cox. I'm the chairman of the youth advisory board which stands for Students Against Violence Everywhere. SAVE is a student body run public nonprofit striving to decrease the potentials for violence in our schools and communities by promoting meaningful students' involvement, education and service opportunities. The history of SAVE, **Angie Bynam**, a student, and Gary Ward, a teacher, from West Charlotte High School in North Carolina started Students Against Violence Everywhere, SAVE, in 1989 in the memory of **Alex Orange**, a student from the school. Alex Orange was at a party trying to promote – trying to break up a fight at a party. The SAVE colors come from Alex Orange last name and the color purple come from the peace symbol and the peace color.

We try our best to promote the word nonviolence. And by nonviolence we mean by – in all forms. Not, you know just violence with people. We mean by reckless driving, gang violence, child abuse and cyber bullying, just to name a few. And we do this by, we call it the four E's, which we come to Empower, Engage, Encourage and Educate. By engaging, we engage students to meaningful violence prevention efforts with their schools and communities. Empower youth. By empowerment, we empower youth with knowledge and skills necessary to provide service to their communities and schools. We encourage positive peer influence within the school and the community through violence prevention efforts. We educate students about the effects and consequences of violence, as well as safe activities for students, parents and the community.

Our two main components of SAVE is conflict management and service projects. With conflict management, kids are taught that conflicts are a normal part of life. And as we all know, that

conflicts would not be resolved – always be resolved. But we try to resolve it in a nonviolent way where we can talk it out, go to peer mediation or just talk it out with the person you have a problem with.

And then we also have another one, which is – excuse me – service projects. Service projects are how we learn to give back to the community and connect with other people. Just by connecting and giving back, you know you should feel like you're doing something to help the problem.

The reason I got involved with SAVE. I got involved with SAVE in my sixth grade year. My deputy saw potential in me and right then and there, from my sixth grade year, she started working with me. And by the time I got to my seventh grade she told me, "I see something in you." And I'm glad she saw it in me, cause true, I saw it too, but I really didn't see it and I'm glad she did see it.

If just one person can stand up and take the stand and say, "Not here, not today, not while I'm around," it's something that will catch on and the other person will get the SAVE message. So just by doing that I hope you can – I hope I encourage somebody or the SAVE chapter or the SAVE group or the SAVE organization can help someone.

SAVE works to do this by going out and promoting the word nonviolence. And the idea of nonviolence tolerated anywhere. I would like to tell you a story about an experience I had reaching out. It was a time where, you know I was doing a – I was speaking in Raleigh, North Carolina. Raleigh-Durham. And a young lady came to me, a younger girl came to me. And she was like, "I have a personal story." And she started telling me her story. And I felt it in my heart, because I had the same experience at one point in time in my life. And I could see her expression getting brighter because she knew somebody else that was on her side to just, you know that had been through the same thing that I had been through. She felt like I can help. And I'm really glad that I did it, you know I was able to come to her rescue and help.

And in my closing statement, for being involved with SAVE it's not about the title, not about being a chairperson or even being on the youth advisory board. It's about getting the message across from the young people up to the grown people. It's all about getting the message out that violence is not tolerated and it

shouldn't be tolerated. I mention grown people because some people have abusive relationships and that's not a kind of – that's another kind of violence that kids see and then grow up to do the same thing. Which I don't think is right. But as we say, we were just trying to work that situation out.

But if they have been somebody or some organization that could help them, then that's one more type of violence that we won't have to worry about some day. And if you are not a part of the solution, then that mean you a part of the problem. And on behalf of Nigel Cox, myself, and Students Against Violence Everywhere national youth advisory board, we would like to thank you for having me today. Thank you.

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.:* Thank you, Mr. Cox. Dr. McCarthy?

*Patrick McCarthy:* Well, good morning. I want to thank the task force for this opportunity to speak with you this morning about ways to reduce children's exposure to violence and to share how we can work together to, in fact, reduce the negative effects of violence no kids. I have to start by just saying it's a little bit of a daunting and humbling idea for me to be attempting to provide guidance to the assembled expertise that I heard introduced this morning, but I'll do my best.

The Casey Foundation's work is guided by data and evidence. Research that we have looked at suggests that there are basically three factors that predict most rotten outcomes for kids across the board. First, whether they grow up in poverty with limited hope and limited opportunities to develop all their talents and gifts. Second, whether they have a stable nurturing connection to a stronger family, a family that'll be there for life. And third, whether they live in a community that offers role models, safe streets, good educational opportunities and connections to a path for success.

And all three of these factors actually are also critical to preventing violence and to lessening the impact of exposure to violence. My written testimony attempts to make the case for addressing these three factors. And in my remarks today I'll touch very briefly on each of those three. But I intend to spend the bulk of my time discussing the importance of reforming our reform schools.

So first, briefly, the impact of poverty. We know that the root cause of most bad outcomes for kids is poverty or lack of opportunity. We also know that poverty and violence are closely linked. Kids in poverty are far more likely to experience violence, whether at home or in their communities. But what do we know about how to reduce poverty and how to build a pathway to opportunity for all children?

We know that the pathway to opportunity requires a two generation family economic success strategy. In other words, we must start by investing in opportunities for young parents to build the skills, find a stable family supporting job, take full advantage of income and other supports they need to make ends meet and start down the road to building assets that they can pass on to their children. So we've got to start with today's parents to build a future for children.

At the same time, we must work to ensure that every child is on the pathway to opportunity through educational success using the important benchmark of reading proficiently by the end of third grade, going on to graduate from high school and secure a post secondary certificate or diploma or skill certification. I need to say that it is especially disturbing when you look at the data and you realize that over 80 percent of poor children of color reach the end of third grade without being proficient in reading. This is the point where learning turns from learning how to read to reading how to learn. It's very difficult to catch up if you're not reading proficiently by the end of third grade.

In addition to the foundation's work on reducing poverty, we also invest considerable time and money and various approaches to promoting strong families. Including our direct services work in New England and in Maryland where we provide foster care to young people with high needs and help them find a permanent family for life. We also work to promote responsible fatherhood and healthy marriage. We support teen pregnancy prevention programs. And we work with child welfare systems across the country to improve outcomes for kids and families. And finally, promote more effective prevention and early intervention programs.

Our approach to the community rests on our belief that families rely on strong communities and strong neighborhood supports to raise their kids. To have places where there are safe streets, good

schools, quality housing and access to economic opportunity and access to employment. An engaged, thriving community knows to work together with law enforcement to provide neighborhood policing, offers positive youth development activities and antiviolence interventions that can reduce violence and promote pro-social norms of behavior for both adults and kids.

Now in the time I have left I'd like to highlight the negative consequences of this country's current approach to the challenge of juvenile delinquency. An approach that I believe is singularly ineffective, hugely wasteful and a contributor to violence rather than an effective response to violence.

Whether we call them training schools, reform schools, juvenile correctional facilities or youth prisons, these large part security institutions too often have become places of poor treatment and abuse rather than rehabilitation and hope. Recidivism rates are dismal. Suggesting that these institutions fail to protect public safety. Abuse and poor treatment are rampant, as evidenced by the absolutely shameful prevalence of course cases and reports of substandard conditions and violations of basic rights going back decades, and sadly, still prevalent today.

And there can be little argument that we over rely on these institutions as a response to delinquency. The United States locks up – the United States locks up kids at approximately 7 times the rate of Great Britain and 18 times the rate of France. States with relatively low incarceration rates do not suffer from high juvenile crime. In fact, their juvenile crime rates are lower than states that lock up more kids. And states such as California and Louisiana and Alabama and Texas that have greatly reduced the number of incarcerated kids, in some cases by over 50 percent, have not experienced a rise in youth crime.

The sad irony is that as many as three-fourths of the young people incarcerated in these often brutal facilities have, in fact, themselves been victims of trauma and violence in their own lives. And following their incarceration, they are more likely rather than less likely, to commit violent acts.

You would be hard pressed if you tried to design a less effective response to a child's exposure to violence than to lock him or her up in an overcrowded, loud, brightly lit, depressing, frightening conditions with a large group of other children with similar

problems, little or no privacy and no sense of personal safety. And then fail to provide a decent education or an opportunity to build skills, neglect to address the mental health, substance abuse, trauma and family issues that contributed to the delinquent behavior and then release him or her to the streets with little hope for a future of promise or possibility. This is not a recipe for success.

The Casey Foundation published a report about a month ago called *No Place for Kids, The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration*, which provides considerable detail on the flaws of these systems and recommends replacing them with evidenced based community centered interventions that have much greater success in both rehabilitating young people and protecting public safety. These evidenced based programs can much more effectively address the trauma and loss that often contribute to kids' behavioral problems.

Casey intends to devote our time and money and to partner with others to reduce the number of youth locked up in this country by at least half, as well as supporting the development of more effective models for those youth who do require some form of secure care to ensure public safety. If we are successful, we together can close the last door on the last training school in this country.

While foundations and nonprofits can help develop and demonstrate effective interventions at the program level, taking the most effective programs to a scale large enough to make a difference for whole populations of kids and families requires public investment. Which means redirecting resources from the failed approaches of the past. We need to find the public will and the political courage to abandon these failed strategies that use so much of our limited resources and to invest it in things that work. The chance to change the future depends on it. Thank you.

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.:* Thank you, Dr. McCarthy. Ms. Sonja Sohn.

*Sonja Sohn:* Good morning, everyone. I'd like to thank the Defending Childhood Task Force for asking me to participate in this panel. I'd also like to say that by no means do I consider myself a conventional expert on the subject of violence against children. However, what I suppose does make me worthy of participation in this hearing is that I have lived the experiences of the millions of

children who have been exposed to violence in their homes and their communities.

When you grow up on a household where domestic abuse is a regular occurrence, you see things that, though you may heal from, you will never forget. I remember lying in bed on alert late one night as I heard an argument brewing in my parent's bedroom. Only to be shocked by the deafening sound of my mother's jaw being crushed. I remember watching in horror as my mother's head lay on the chopping block of our kitchen counter while my father held a larger butcher's knife to her throat as she cried and begged to be put out of her misery.

My mother used to tell a story of how I stopped an argument between her and my father when I was a toddler by telling my father to, "Stop it. Don't make my mommy cry." I was two years old. That incident kicked off a pattern of my believing that I had some control over and some responsibility for the situation. For years I tried to fix the family problem. My mother was a first generation immigrant to the United States and did not read or write English very well, so from the age of seven I tried to convince her that we could make it on our own. That she could work and I could read and write for her. For a while I did fill out job applications and began to keep her checkbook whenever she would consider stashing away a little something to leave with. Inevitably though, my hopes were dashed when her belief that we needed a father would begin to override her ability to see that our living situation was much too harsh for any of us to come out unscathed.

By the time I was ten years old I had grown hopeless. Although I knew the only thing that kept my mother alive was the fact that she had children to live for, my best laid plans to save myself began to become more and more of a reality to me. I knew I was too young to get a work permit, so I saw running away to New York to become a prostitute as my only option. But on the day I was to leave I found I couldn't. Not because I was afraid for myself, but because I was afraid for my mother. I collapsed into a heap of tears on my pillow because I knew if I left it would crush her. That she would feel as though she had failed as a mother. What would she do to herself? Who would protect her? I was the only one who called the **hollow eyed** cops, who, at that time, were good for nothing but interrupting the madness for a moment.

Eventually I gave up on believing that there was a sensible solution to my problems. I began to obsess over the only solution I felt was available to me – that I had to kill my father. I spent weeks trying to figure out how to get my hands on a gun, but I had no success. So I resorted to a new option after reading in a magazine how a popular R&B singer of the day had been scalded by a hot of grits. My last attempt to save myself and the family came one day when I was washing dishes. I watched myself calmly take the biggest pot we had, fill it with water, put it on the stove to boil and went back to doing the dishes. I know now that when I began to watch myself as though I were outside of my body I had disassociated.

Once the water boiled, I took the pot and I walked slowly into the living room and I stood over my father as he slept on the sofa. All the scenes of violence I had witnessed flashed before my mind's eye. And then I saw us without him. I saw myself happy and free in my home. I saw laughter on the faces of the rest of my family. I stepped closer to the sofa. Just as I was about to throw the water him a horrifying thought suddenly jolted me to consciousness. The singer did not die. This pot of water was not going to kill my father. Suddenly the pot seemed to shrink in my hands and so did I. I began to see myself as this tiny child I was. A wave of grief and sadness rushed over me. I stood there growing smaller and smaller until I felt completely insignificant and totally useless.

Within a couple of years my contempt for the entire family and this crazy situation had poisoned the only thing that gave me any real validation. Doing well in school. Now all I wanted was to survive the next eight years. My bridge back to finding some kind of joy when things felt unbearable became getting high. My childhood and part of my adulthood were completely lost to the effects of living with violence in my home and my community as a child.

The story I'm telling you about my childhood is playing out right now in the homes of children right here in Baltimore. Within a mile of where we are sitting there are children who live in the midst of violence and fear every day. And when they walk outside the front door and onto the street they often faces still more violence. Growing up with verbal and physical abuse all around you means much more of this violence is carried into your social interactions with others. Out onto the playground, in school and on the streets of your neighborhood. Another threat to your safety that you have to learn to handle begins to cripple your thinking even more.

For many children, living with this type of violence, participating in crime becomes a way of creating safety. If you can illustrate how tough or how daring you are, if you can fight someone and win through verbal or physical assaults, then no one will challenge you. For a while at least. Inevitably there will always come a time where your last victorious fight or daring act will be forgotten. Someone else will challenge you and the cycle begins again. You fight every time for that brief period of what feels like safety. And, of course, it isn't. These kids only know the shadow of safety. Not the real thing.

When you live in a world that is never safe, where you feel abandoned and uncared for, numbing the pain and finding some kind of support becomes an essential survival skill. This is how I became, and how many children today become easy prey for pedophiles. This is why our young people create the nurturance they so desperately need by forming and joining gangs. This is why many children enter into the drug world at an early age. This is why the sex trade begins to seem like a viable option. And this is how we lose our nation's future.

Without resources to deal with trauma, numbing your pain with drugs and sex and creating an illusion of family by seeking supporting on the streets become your coping mechanisms. You will take what is given easily and freely. Oftentimes these children end up in a pattern of using these self-destructive acts to escape the smallest of discomforts, never gaining the proper ability to handle the simple stresses of every day life. They end up having sex as a way to find emotional support and may become very young parents. The effects of the violence they live with just add up in layers. Burying them. Sometimes literally.

We have generations of people living in this country, not some third world country overseas. This one right here. Suffering from the effects of trauma, abuse and violence. The problem is so severe and so large that it threatens to overwhelm us. We wonder what we can do. Particularly for a youth who have already entered into a life of crime and violence, oftentimes society has simply given up, especially on the older ones.

There are so many challenges that these young people face. They face obstacles inside their own minds, as well as outside. And it's the desperation that keeps them trapped in their own minds that we

deal with through Rewire for Life, our program for high risk youth who have been involved in the criminal justice system. The objective of the Rewire for Life program is to make personal transformation in the hood cool. Rewire for Life focuses on individual success. It uses the arts as a tool for healing. Some of the young people who have gone through our program have changed their life goals. They are working or have gone back to school. They have made a decision to leave the life of drug dealing and to excel at a life of law abiding employment. Less money, less of a certain kind of prestige in the neighborhoods they come from. But they are safer and less violent and have gained more self-respect.

We are all here today to ask ourselves what we can do to contribute to the change that must take place. As adults, as professionals, as human beings, we owe it to these children to give them more. Kids in this environment must have easy access to tools other than drugs and unhealthy associations to keep them out of survival mode. And we cannot forget or ignore their parents. To effectively address children's exposure to violence, we must address the needs of the families and communities they live in as well.

I'd like to close by saying that my family of origin, and, to a much smaller degree, my children, have suffered from the after effects of the environment I grew up in. And though we lost my brother to homicide some years ago, my family has come a long way, including my father, who has realized over the years the causes of his past behavior. Today, I am thrilled to say that we enjoy a healthy family life.

So, from me to you, I know what it takes for a family to heal. I know what is possible. I know there are many paths to inner peace and healing. And that it is an individual process and a life long journey, no matter who you are or where you come from. Though the path may be more difficult for some than others. And I also know that no one can find that path on their own. That we, as a society, must come together to be the supports and cornerstones for each other, especially for those cannot mount a support team when they are living a life that is always on a constant state of crisis.

I appreciate the efforts of those who are here today to share their testimony and the Defending Childhood Task Force for the work they are all doing to stop this vicious cycle of violence that has

affected our entire society. I am grateful for the invitation to testify before the task force and to join you in your efforts to help change the lives of our nation's children. Thank you.

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.:* Thank you. We'd like to thank each of the panelists for your testimony. At this it's open to questions from the task force.

*Georgina Mendoza:* Hi. I want to thank all of you for sharing your personal and powerful stories and for your commitment to this very important issue. Mr. Cox, I have to say I'm very impressed with your leadership. Oftentimes we talk about how we're going to address gang and youth violence without actually asking the youth. You know we as adults sometimes take it upon ourselves and say, "We know best how to define the problem. We know best what's gonna work and what the solutions should be," without including you as equal partners. I think it's absolutely essential to have groups like yours, like SAVE. And I guess the question I have for you would be how can adults, or grown people as you say, be able to better support organizations like yours?

*Nigel Cox:* \_\_\_\_\_ I would say from the Bible. Train your child the way they should go. And like if you just train and mold a child like when they start younger, you know that can get them some kind of support or backbone, you know to lead them not going to that gang direction or going to that path that we wouldn't – well, a parent wouldn't want their child to go into.

But if people don't, if parents don't do that as their child is younger, you know it's always you can talk to them. It's always, you know showing them the worst case scenario, what can happen when they out there. And just talking to your child can make a whole lot difference in they life.

*Sarah Deer:* Thank you to all the panelists for your contributions today. I wanted to ask Dr. McCarthy a couple questions. One is about what you're seeing in the rural areas. I think a lot of times we tend to focus on youth and violence in an urban setting. So I'm curious to know what you've found in the rural setting, in Indian country, if possible. And then what do you see are the biggest gaps in the research right now? You've done some tremendous work in terms of defining and describing the problem. But if you were to be able to design a new research plan to address these gaps with things we don't know, what would that look like?

*Patrick McCarthy:* Sure. You'll probably have to remind me of the second question after I take a shot at responding to the first. You know we do a fair amount of work in rural communities, although most of our work is in urban communities. And what we've found in rural areas is the combination of poverty, which actually is higher proportionately in rural communities than it is in urban areas – the combination of that poverty and isolation can lead to the kinds of challenges that, again, in turn, lead to violence. Whether that be alcoholism or substance abuse or the general sense of disconnection from the labor force.

We've supported tribal communities in a variety of ways. We've not focused specifically on issues around violence. We've focused more on raising up the general issues that are affecting tribal nations, as well as child welfare issues as tribal nations take on more and more of that responsibility themselves. And, you know I have to say that although the particular pattern, the values, the norms, the preferences of different groups, it's going to vary, of course. You know my own family is different from my wife's family. Our families of origin. And it's always interesting at Thanksgiving to watch this mini cultural class. So there are differences. But I actually believe, whether you're talking about rural families or urban families or families who are Native American origin or European origin or African origin, that this notion of families working together to raise their children and relying on themselves as a group, but also on families outside of the immediately family, that's the pathway I think for kids to be successful. I think that's true whether it's the rural areas or the urban areas.

So we do have to take account of the differences. They're very real. But at the same time, let's not lose touch with the fact that we all grow up in the context of family.

You asked about the gaps in the research. And that's one of those interesting things from my point of view. I actually think we know a lot more than we use. And so there are huge gaps in research in understanding all of the dynamics. We don't by anywhere, nowhere close to a magic bullet or a set of magic bullets. Probably a bad analogy. Magic solutions to resolving issues of violence. But we're not using anywhere near what we already know. So it seems to me that one of the biggest gaps in research is figuring out how you go from effective program level interventions, and there are many with lots of evidence behind them – how do you go from

that to scaling them up large enough that they actually can help whole populations of families and kids? For me that's a huge investment that we ought to be making because, again, we got to continue doing the basic research to figure out what works. But if most of what we know sits on the shelf and the bulk of the resources we spend are, in fact, going towards things that not only don't work, but actually do harm, that's not so smart. So.

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.:* Dr. Marans.

*Steve Marans:* I want to thank all the panelists and you'll hear that from each of us, but it's quite sincere. Ms. Sohn, I wanted to thank you in particular for making our work harder. You have given us such a brilliant personal but one that is generalizable in terms of the complexities of what we really mean when we talk about exposure to violence. And you remind those of us in the behavioral health and health fields that the issue of what for whom is a major, major issue. But I'm grateful for your making our task harder by reminding us of the complexity. I want to focus on one issue and I have a question for you and for Dr. McCarthy.

You described this incredible sense of being small and going back and forth between planning and plotting an action to remedy your situation and being defeated and the subsequent feeling of absolutely helplessness and being small. And then you made the link to the kids that you're working with now who have had similar experiences, who find the antidote to that smallness in the, all of the things that you so beautiful listed. And I won't list them again.

But the what for whom also goes to how and who can reach those kids, especially, as you point out, the older kids. Because it makes a difference, doesn't it?

*Sonja Sohn:* Yes. Absolutely.

*Steve Marans:* I wonder if you can share some of your experience in that regard with the committee.

*Sonja Sohn:* From my experience, the older kids need to know that the adults who are reaching out to them really understand where they come from. So generally speaking, from my experience, those older kids begin to open up when they hear the stories of the adults who are facilitating programming with them and they see that there are similarities. We, you know initially during our pilot session the

co-facilitator was a gentleman who had spent 20 years in prison and, you know had the whole story. And after a couple weeks the young men in the class began to open up and listen. And our conversations went quickly from defending – from the young people defending their actions out on the street to, through the brilliance of this facilitator by using his own life, to the young people then starting to question their former actions.

So I would say with the older kids if folks can find adults who have lived the kind of lives that they have lived, then it makes for a much quicker transition.

*Steve Marans:*

A question for Dr. McCarthy. Thank you so much. And one of the issues we know, all of us as human beings is one of the hardest things is to tolerate and acknowledge that, in fact, we were helpless and small. Dr. McCarthy, in your disturbing and dismal account of our current system of reform training schools, whatever, you pointed out that the real underlying behavioral health issues, along with opportunities, etcetera are not addressed. Are you aware of any programs where the combination of necessary external controls, for example, by probation, court orders and behavioral health interventions have been blended in a way that address a particular group of kids with whom I think Ms. Sohn has some experience with as well?

*Patrick McCarthy:*

Sure. I'm gonna take this opportunity to make a couple points along this line. One is I suspect if you ask the average person on the street whether you youth crime has gotten worse or better, the answer you would get is it's gotten much worse. Whether youth violence has gotten better or worse, oh, my god, youth violence is much worse than it was 15, 20 years ago. If you look at the data that's absolutely untrue. In fact, youth crime has gone down by at least a third in the last 15 years. So that's a fact that people don't pay attention to as they think about build more prisons, less prisons, etcetera.

You know you ask the question about what do we know that's effective that blends addressing mental health, substance abuse, trauma related problems together with the necessary controls and response to adolescent misbehavior. You know 20 or so years ago we had the combination of a series of articles that warned us about a coming wave of super predators. Remember that? Super predators who born of the crack epidemic and the collapse of the

family in urban areas were gonna overwhelm us with delinquency. And as I said, not true.

Accompanying that notion of super predator was a very widespread belief, backed up by some data, that “nothing works”. In other words, folks who had done careful controlled studies of lots of interventions in juvenile and adult criminal behavior concluded, you know what? It really doesn’t make any difference if we do these programs or not. So to protect the community, let’s lock these kids up.

Twenty years later that is a very different scene. We now know at least four very strong evidenced based interventions that, in fact, do exactly what you asked about. Three of them have terrible names. I think. Apologies to the developers of these wonderful programs. But one is multi systemic therapy. The other is functional family therapy. And the third is the, ready for this one? Multidimensional treatment foster care model. Forget those names. They all build around the fundamental notion that the way to help kids to strengthen their family’s ability to work with them, family defined very broadly, and to provide these young people with a path towards hope. Whether you look at recidivism, mental health scores, education, job attachment, all of these programs have much greater success rates than just leaving them alone, which is the one alternative, and much, much better than locking them up. And these programs have worked with young people with felony level and violent offenses, some of the toughest offenses. And this research is not just anecdotal. It’s not just stories. This is controlled scientific research replicated multiple times. Not one shot research but replicated multiple times. So when I say we’re not using a lot of what we know, that’s an example of what I mean.

In addition, however, for those young people, and I’m not as Pollyannaish as it may sometimes come off, for those young people who, in fact, do need a period of secure care for their own protection or the perfection of the community, there are alternative approaches to providing that secure care that lead to much better results. Probably the best known is known as the Missouri Model where about 30 years ago a friend of mine, Mark Stewart, began the process of moving from these large hardwired, hard security institutions to smaller, still secure, but smaller treatment focused norm changing focused, I would suspect using a lot of the kinds of approaches that Father Boyle uses with gang members. Working

to change their expectations about their future while still holding them accountable.

When you look, again, at recidivism rates, the recidivism rates for young people coming through the Missouri Model are much, much better, by a factor of 2 or 3, than young people going through much more expensive, by the way, other interventions.

So you put all that together and we just don't have any excuse anymore. We don't have the super predator excuse that was total – what's the appropriate word? Malarkey, I think. It's total malarkey. We don't have the excuse that juvenile crime is going up. It's going down and has gone down consistently for the last 15 years. And we don't have the excuse that nothing else works. The only excuse we have is the lack of courage, the lack of political will as the adults in this society to stick up for our kids and do better by them.

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.:* Chief McDonnell.

*Jim McDonnell:* Thank you all for your leadership and your courage on this issue. Dr. McCarthy, if I could, just an issue you raised that I don't think gets enough attention in our society. And that's the issue of literacy by the time a kid leaves the third grade. I've seen that throughout the course of my career in dealing with kids going into gangs, kids that go down the wrong path. And it seems that at nine or ten kids come to a crossroad, particularly in urban America. Where they either are encouraged by their ability to be able to do well in school and then stay that path, or become disillusioned because they're not getting positive attrition in school and then start to look for it elsewhere. That elsewhere, too often, is gangs or crime. In looking at that issue, what recommendations would you make that you'd like to see this panel address as a remedy to be able to start moving in the direction to deal with those issues at that age group?

*Patrick McCarthy:* Sure. And this is another area where we have lots of evidence about what works. Not everything we need to know, but we know a lot more than we're using. So if you think of it not just as is the child reading by the end of third grade, but what are all the things that need to happen for a child to be reading well by the end of third grade. So you have to really start prenatally. Again, preventing teen pregnancy. That's a huge impact on a child's start in life. Once the child is – once the parents have conceived,

having the child receive the kind of prenatal care necessary so they get the right start.

In the first three years of life, this is common knowledge now, much of the neurological development, not all of it by the way. Let's be clear. But much of the neurological development that takes place over the course of a lifetime begins and gets accelerated in those first three years of life. It's a critical period of time. We, in fact, know about effective home visiting programs and early childhood interventions that start children on the right path. Especially those children who may be growing up in families that don't have the opportunities to provide them with the kind of cognitive stimulation and emotional and social supports that children in more well to do families may have the opportunity to experience.

We know that high quality early childhood and preschool makes a big difference. There is ample research. Not all early childhood programs. Let's be clear. There are a lot of things that don't work. But we do know what does work. And if we can take that to larger scale, then we can put the child on a path. We tend to think of preschool and then there's like this little membrane and all of the sudden they're in school. If we just tear away that membrane and recognize that from zero to eight is a critical period where the transition from those early childhood programs into preschool, into kindergarten, into the first elementary years need to be lined up. And at each step in that path we need to be providing the most effective interventions. Not only for the children, but remember, parents are their children's first teachers, to the parents and to the families. That's the pathway to success.

But just a quick story. I have four kids. One of them has a pretty severe learning disability which we didn't discover until fourth grade. And your prediction of what happens to a young person. Now here we are, we're, you know a well to do family at the time living in a suburb. You know we're white. We have all sorts of supports. People expect us to do well, etcetera. And I want to tell ya, that when my son was not doing well in school he began to exhibit all sorts of behaviors that stuck with him until he was in high school and somehow the synapses connected and he made it. But he could have very easily gone down a very different path. Certainly if we were in an urban area, if we were treated differently because of the color of our skin and we didn't have the financial resources to provide him with the supports that he

needed. This is not anything but opportunity that we're talking about here. My son had it. Most kids don't.

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.:* Father Boyle.

*Greg Boyle:* Yes, again, thank you all for being here. This question is for Sonja. It's the emphasis here because children are so vulnerable that how do we shield them and protect them from the effects of violence. But I'm curious as to, give us a window on your father. Because even in earlier testimony you start to get hopeless about the ability of an anger management class. Or what would you have delivered now given you're, you know adult and retrospective, as the perspective on what was his profile. You mentioned in your written testimony about, you know he was a veteran. So what could have helped him and shielded you in the process? But what would we have delivered as a society to him that would have prevented any of this from happening?

*Sonja Sohn:* That's a great question. I think that's the question in so many ways. And I have to tell you, the first answer that comes to my mind is there's nothing. There's hardly anything that you could have done. I think there's only one thing that could really surmount the insurmountable problems that I faced as a kid. My father was mentally ill. I later found out that he was a paranoid schizophrenic. He was on lots of medication. My father is a brilliant man. He had moments of brilliance as a parent. My father, you know there were phases in our life where we tried to have Sunday dinner. Now it might have been a tyrannical nightmarish affairs at times. But there were times when there was laughter at the table. My father thought he should teach us all to play chess. By the time you were six you knew how to play chess. He had these moments of brilliance. But he had these – there came a time when he just turned into a monster and I could no longer justify loving him.

The only thing that I think, and this may, you know seem very kumbaya-ish, Pollyannaish, I think we underestimate the power of love. I think the other answer that I gave you, you know what I failed to say, is that not only – you know these children or these young people don't simply respond to people who come from the same backgrounds that they come from. That's helpful for sure. That will knock the door down quickly. But they are also very moved by people who continue to show up when the disappoint them. They are moved at consistency of presence in their lives.

Whether you come from – because a lot of times they will sort of, they'll discount your history because it was so long ago. You know. Sometimes it takes a minute.

But I do believe that there's – you know and Father Boyle, I mean I'm sure that you know these. That all of us have the ability to affect, you know these children's lives. You know whether your specialty is through policy and being a part of this task force or not. I think that, you know mentoring and having a young person in your life and you're showing up on a regular basis despite whatever challenges that come, despite the fact that they may get locked up again or something else is happened or your heart is broken, they've, you know disappointed. But continue to show up.

You know consistency, you know that kind of consistency, you know and that kind of support, you know that's nurturance. Those are the components of love. And I think we should not forget that just the power of the human spirit and the human heart here when we're doing our jobs. When we're interacting with people in general and with children especially.

*Tony Taguba:*

Well, at the sake of repeating everybody else, thanks again for all three of you for sharing your stories with us. I want to ask Ms. Sohn question and only because I share your same story. I come from an immigrant family. My father is a very rigid man. Highly disciplined. Also an Army soldier. So he was brought up in that particular segment. And he was also absent at the time and very abusive to the family.

But my question to you is in terms of your project here, you know I know we're gonna be hearing similar organizations that deal with domestic violence and youth programs, but have you thought – and resources are kind of at a premium today. And I know you're probably not getting a lot of federal funding or state funding and things of that nature. But have you thought about partnering with other organizations that have the similar mission, the similar objectives, the similar target population that you're dealing with?

*Sonja Sohn:*

Well, we do in small ways. I mean our organization, you know has a pretty broad mission. One is to help these young people who have been affected by violence and who live in these underserved communities. And the other is to raise awareness through our association with the media. Right now our efforts in Baltimore are all focused – are out of the Village House, which is our community

house that we started here in east Baltimore. And over there we, you know we could not do what we are doing without the help of Zion Baptist Church and Pastor Marshall Prentice who, for the first year, gave us a place and continues to give us a place to operate out of. We are working with the Oliver Community Center, which is just around the corner from where we're located. They are providing a space for some intergenerational programming.

It's a small operation right now. And we do have our problems. We work with the police department. There's the Eastern District Commander, Major Melvin Russell, is an amazing man who actually has his own nonprofit called the Transformation Team. And he's been – and he and the neighborhood services unit that is a part of the police department have been particularly helpful to us. Helping us renovate. Helping to provide security for events. They have – some of the officers have come and done a – facilitated the DARE program for some of the smaller children. So that's how we are partnering with the community right now. I'll leave it right there. I'm still thinking about Father Boyle's question in terms of how to – and if I could go back to it quickly. May I? May I revisit that?

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.:* Please.

*Sonja Sohn:* You know I know it sounded sort of hopefulness when I said that I don't think there was much anyone could have done. I mean the scenario could have played out a number of ways. There were times when I thought about going into foster care. But, you know with the situation with my mom and feeling like I had to protect here, that would have given me a lot of stress had that happened. I thought I could survive maybe that way.

When I was 12 years old I wanted so badly to be sent to a boarding school. I thought that would be my ticket. But when all my teachers sat me down, because I intentionally failed all my classes. I was an honor student. I was the president of the student government. I had great promise. They knew my test scores. I could read. And most of my friends could read. Okay. I was a pretty smart kid.

But when all my teachers said down and said, "What is going on? You've failed all your – I was trying to get somebody's attention. I could not speak. And I was going, "Can't you see," in my head. I want to go to a boarding school. I shrank in that chair and I cried.

And I wanted them to ask more questions. I wanted them to – because I could not find a voice for it. So, you know but what kept me afloat, let me tell you what kept me afloat. Why I'm here. You know besides my decision at the age of 27 to stop doing drugs and to really get some help.

What kept me afloat all those years were there were some families in that neighborhood, most of my friends were sexually abused. Most of them witnessed violence in the neighborhood. You know the whole neighborhood was traumatized.

*[Being VTS\_01\_4]*

You know that's why were fighting all the time. But what kept me afloat, I remember. And this is the inspiration for the Village House actually. Across the parking lot from where I lived was a couple, Mr. and Ms. Cook. Alice and Baybra. Ms. Alice had a glass eye and a limp. She was physically challenged. Baybra drank in the evenings. But they were always happy and they were jolly. They had adopted a son. And they were always home. And in the summertime they had a u-haul in the middle of the parking lot where they had bicycles. And for a quarter you could rent a bicycle all day. And if you didn't have the quarter, of course you could have the bike. They taught you how to patch your tires. She ran a little candy store and a snow cone shop out of her kitchen. They were the Boy Scout, Cub Scout, Girl Scout, Brownie leaders. This couple who had all of these challenges, were experiencing challenges themselves, and some people would have thought were dysfunctional in their own right. But they were the bright spot of that neighborhood. And they kept us going.

There was another couple down the street – there was one fully functional beautiful family in my whole block. And I became – they moved into our neighborhood when I was about ten. I became friends with the daughter. Mr. and Ms. Braxton. And Ms. Braxton was a stay at home mom. Mr. Braxton worked at the shipyard. The evening shift. And they always had food on the table, you know at the right times during the day. There was always a parent home. They took me on family trips. You know I would go to their house as a respite because it felt warm. It felt fuzzy. It was – I had bright spots like that, you know that kept me going.

And I happened to be a kid, and I think, you know we're also leaving out here is emotional intelligence. Is that regardless of how smart you are, how well you can read, you know or how little you can read, if your emotional intelligence quotient is very high, you know the likelihood that you're gonna make it out of this thing alive and somewhat functional is actually higher. Despite all your challenges.

And though I think we had genetic predisposition for this kind of thing, particularly considering where my father came from and my mother had a completely tragic story, I happened to be someone who was born as a kid, as a five year old I knew I was born for a purpose. It was something I knew more than anything in the world. And I just spent my life looking for that, even in all this darkness and all this pain. And at a certain point when I decided to start using drugs, I was just going, "I can't be miserable." Like this is hopeless. I can't change it. I need something that's just gonna bookmark me and hold me right here. And those drugs weren't a great idea, but they were all I had.

You know people couldn't get inside my mind and figure out what was going on and then immediately service me. But I also had the ability to say, "Okay, where is the light? Where is the positivity? I'm gonna find that." And so we need to find a way to nurture that in our children. The ability to find positivity and find light in your life. And despite your circumstances, where can you be grateful? You know where do you have resources? Let's not just crowd them with all these information of what they don't have. And let's not totally treat them as victims. Let's treat them as champions and as people who can and will overcome their circumstances.

*Robert Listenbee Jr.:* Ms. Sohn, how do we as a task force translate that need into a policy recommendation? It's clear that those are the saving graces, those are the tools that children need in order to survive really difficult circumstances. But how do we translate that into a policy recommendation?

*Sonja Sohn:* That's a big question. I'm sure that I will have a lot more to say about it once I leave here and process that. Have some time to think about it. But, and I just, you know I have to say what I think a lot of times is unspeakable in forums like this. Which is we don't – you know there is not a lot of programming out there that focuses on – you know one of the reasons why we use the arts in Rewire for Life is because we want to nurture a child's ability or a

young person's ability to create. And what – see I know what creativity can do. I know what happened to me when at the age of 30 I started acting. And I know that some of my healing tools came through the techniques I learned in acting. And I know that my fellow cofounders of this organization who come from very similar backgrounds that I do, that I come from, understand the power of creativity. And creativity is very closely linked to spirit. And if we can find programming that fosters creativity and opens up the window inside a young person to their own heart and the power of their own spirit, then we can – then I can say that we'll be on a – you know we'll be adding to that track.

But in terms of policy, you know that's something that I'd really have to think about. I'd actually like to talk to you about that on the side. I'd like to hear your ideas considering, you know what I've said in terms of policy. Policy these days is a tough one I think all around no matter what subject we're addressing.

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.:* Folks, we are nearing the end of this panel. I have one question I would like to ask Dr. McCarthy. And it bears a great deal on the overall issue of money. It costs 150, 60-, 70- dollars a year to send one child to secure confinement in the state of Pennsylvania for one year. Over \$150,000.00. Why is it – I'm not speaking of Pennsylvania alone – but why is it that states find it so hard to listen to the evidence that has been developed on why many of these placements are not successful with the kind of costs that are involved when those costs could be shifted to a program like the one Mr. Cox is talking about, the one Ms. Sohn is talking about, and hundreds of other programs that are available, viable and effective? Why is that?

*Patrick McCarthy:* So let me start by saying thank you for not asking me as tough a question as you asked Ms. Sohn. I greatly appreciate it. I think there are a number of answers to the question. One, if we're just talking now about the huge investments in juvenile correctional facilities.

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.:* Correct. \_\_\_ detention.

*Patrick McCarthy:* Let's start with that. You've got the problem essentially of sunk costs. I used to run a juvenile correctional system. I ran these facilities. So I've been inside the belly of the beast so to speak, but I had a key to get out. The marginal costs of putting one more young man in that facility was close to nothing. So when you say

that something costs \$150,000.00 a year, it's not that every time a young person gets that on conveyor belt towards the institution that if you could grab him off that conveyor belt you'd have 150,000 to send him to Harvard for a doctoral degree over the course of time. That's not how it works. So that's a big challenge. Fortunately, you know we're actually starting to see in, again, places like New York and California and Alabama and, to a certain extent, even in Pennsylvania and Louisiana and Texas, we're starting to see partially drawn out of the fiscal crisis, partially drawn out of a common sense consensus that cuts across ideology. In other words, the conservative point of view, the progressive point of view kind of coming together and saying, this is just dumb. It's not making any sense and we can't afford it anymore. That people are finally in a lot of these states taking steps.

And how are they doing it? In places like California they just change the incentives. Used to be that if you were one of the counties in California and you had a young person who was a felon you could send them off to the state and it didn't cost you a dime. If you kept him in the county, you had to provide services. So the state basically changed the incentive. They said, "If you're gonna send them to the state, it's gonna cost you more than if you keep them within your own county and figure out how to treat them there." So if you really need to send them, send them. But you're gonna have to pay more of the freight. And lo and behold, all of these children who couldn't survive any place else except behind bars, all of a sudden that wasn't such an attractive option to the counties. So there's financing things.

We're experimenting with ways where you can basically figure out the financing you need to do to flip these systems. In other words – and that's where I think foundations actually can be helpful. Foundations have huge endowments. We can use those endowments to do bridge funding so that during the period of time where you still have to invest in your high cost enterprise, cause you can't just close it one day and open everything else the next, we can bridge to more effective interventions and thereby, close the pipeline down. And then at that point the states and the cities, etcetera can close these institutions or greatly downsize them, freeing up resources to then continue things on. So I think that's another piece.

But you know at the end of the day, the end of the day this is only a little bit about money and all that technical stuff. At the end day,

again, it's about political will. You know the reality is, the political will emerged in these states that I rambled on about. The political will emerged. People rose up and said, "This is just wrong. It's too expensive and it's not working. We got to do something different." And that's when it changed. That's when it changed.

*Robert Listenbee, Jr.:* Thank you very much. We'd like to thank our panelists for this very insightful testimony. At this time we're going to recess until 1:00 for lunch. Thank you very much.

*[End of Audio]*