



Opening Argument



Richard A. Brown

Youth Gang Conference

Once again this year the Queens County District Attorney's office, together with the Middle Atlantic-Great Lakes Organized Crime Law Enforcement Network (MAGLOCLEN), the New York City Police Department and the East Coast Gang Investigators Association, hosted the Metropolitan Youth Gang Conference. This year's conference -- the eighth annual such event -- was held on May 22nd and 23rd at the Holiday Inn in Jamaica.

We had close to 300 law enforcement professionals and some of the top experts in the country with us to discuss the youth gang problem -- and the violence and criminal activity for which youth gangs are responsible.

We in Queens -- indeed across the entire New York metropolitan area -- have continued to see a significant drop in our crime rate over the past few years. With rare exceptions, the reductions are in double digit percentages and apply to every major crime category. Nevertheless, while our overall crime rate is dropping, gang-related violence and criminal activity continues to plague us -- particularly in our schools.

Expended Substantial Resources

The law enforcement community here in New York has been responding to the problem of gang violence and has developed a widening pool of intelligence with respect to gang-related criminal activity. We have expended substantial resources through the enhancement of our Intelligence Units and the various Gang Enforcement Teams.

The Division of School Safety has also focused on the problem of

gang proliferation in and around our schools through its Gang Unit and through increased security measures. And we have cultivated an information sharing relationship with the Gang Intelligence Units of the New York City and State Departments of Correction.

In addition, prosecutor's offices like ours have augmented our capacity to combat gang-related crime by assigning prosecutors around the clock to respond to gang-related crimes and to provide assistance whenever and wherever needed. We have been successful in targeting violent gang cases and obtaining substantial state sentences for violent gang criminals.

Pro-Active Stance

We have also adopted a proactive stance along with the NYPD's Intelligence Unit and the borough Gang Units by aggressively interrogating gang members upon their arrest and cultivating informants who have provided us with valuable information resulting in numerous search warrants, seizures and arrests.

While we've met with considerable success in fighting gang-related crime, it is clear that if we are to continue to enjoy that success and make further inroads into the youth gang problem, we must share our knowledge, our experience and our expertise. We are winning the battle against gangs, but the war is still raging, and this is no time to rest.

Our Youth Gang Conference was a huge success and was extraordinarily helpful in assisting New York's law enforcement community in responding to the problems of gang-related violence and criminal activity.