

Welcome to What Happens Next  
My name is Larry Bernstein.

Rick Banks:

Our second speaker for this segment will be Connie Rice. She is a fierce advocate for racial justice. As a lawyer, during her long career, Connie worked for nine years with the NAACP legal defense fund. She was also a member, more recently of President Obama's task force on 21st century policing. And she is the co-author of the landmark report that has transformed Los Angeles' approach to gang matters. That report is titled A Call to Action, the case for a comprehensive public health solution to Los Angeles's gang homicide epidemic.

Rick Banks:

Connie first came to my attention many years ago, long before we had ever connected. One of my sisters is a longtime journalist at the Los Angeles Times. And she described to me this lawyer who was not only single-minded in her pursuit of justice, but she was also unwilling to be confined by the conventional approaches to justice. She has both sued the police and worked with the police. She has pursued approaches to reform that might be viewed as politically liberal yet also has not hesitated to work with political conservatives. It was only later that I would learn that she is a cousin of my colleague and previous What Happens Next guest, former Secretary of State Condi Rice.

Rick Banks:

Connie Rice.

Connie Rice:

Thanks so much. 50 years ago, LA County declared a war on gangs, but by 2002, the World Health Organization warned that LA's gang homicide epidemic was surging into a regional threat. In 2007, a landmark study done by a team of over 50 PhD's and street HD's, showed that after spending \$34 billion on the war on gangs, LA County had six times as many gangs and a gang culture so violent that the California Attorney General concluded it was impervious to law enforcement tactics or to general crime declines. With over 9,000 gang killings, 100,000 gunshot victims and war levels of PTSD in the worst gang zones, the call to action study concluded that LA's war on gangs had failed. It concluded you can't arrest your way out of a violent ideology and that epidemic threats require all hands on deck, holistic, meaning not mass incarceration, public health approaches that attack the conditions, behaviors, and policies that shield and fuel violent gang control. In short, instead of whack-a-mole arrests of the same gang members, go after the upstream drivers of gang control.

Connie Rice:

With strong backing from law enforcement, leadership, especially from William J Bratton, LAPD chief at the time, top prosecutor, city controller, Laura Chick, and governor Schwarzenegger, the call to action coalition forced the city to change its strategy from an enforcement mass incarceration war on gangs, to a wraparound safety strategy that the neighborhood team uses to reduce violence, trauma, and criminogenic conditions, and also to

increase safety and investment in the gang hotspot neighborhoods. The models rules of the road require stabilized violence, strategy has to be driven by epidemiologic and other data. You have to make reducing gang membership and crime control an actual job in the city. You have to eliminate the ineffective programs and consolidate their funds for the new strategy. And you have to expend the funds on the wraparound strategy, only where the problems are at an epidemic level. Finally, you have to set safety and health goals, not arrest and incarceration goals. You want health goals for increasing public health infrastructure and increasing investments in communities that have been defunded.

Connie Rice:

First big thing that had happened was we had to create city infrastructure for the model. We created the Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development, whose job it was to close the entrance ramps and open the exit ramps out of gangs and give kids wraparound alternatives, make the schools safe, make going to school safe. Fund an urban peace institute, the Gang Intervention Academy, City of Los Angeles, has the La Vida Gang Intervention Academy, we're the only city that does, although we're in Chicago, trying to help that city develop its Academy. Gang Intervention Academy takes former gang members, they go from predator to peacemaker. They are professionally trained violence intervention workers, at the end of the curriculum, where there are over 60 subject matter areas, they take the courses with officers and gang members together. You have to fund the local neighborhood action groups who sit at the table with the PhD's, agencies and other kinds of professionals, to draft the strategy for that particular zone, that particular safety zone, to make sure that the conditions are tailored for that circumstance.

Connie Rice:

Finally, the philanthropic sector has got to raise the money for the prevention programs and professional evaluation. The second big thing that had to change was LAPD policing. LAPD, chief Charlie Beck, co-created with us a holistic public trust policing, that we call community safety partnership policing. These are the only cops for whom an arrest is a failure. They are rewarded for building trust, building relationships and creating partnerships that create these wraparound strategies for safety, not enforcement safety. Now mind you, they will enforce, they will arrest people who are violent. So they reserve their shock and awe gladiator policing for the 2% of gang members who are actually violent. Did it work? Well, after nine years, we've had several evaluations from Cal State LA, UCLA, USC, University of Iowa, different studies at different times, quantitative and qualitative.

Connie Rice:

The studies show that when you have a defined gang reduction in youth development zone and a community safety partnership policing zone that work together and have used the wraparound safety strategies and gang intervention prevention models for three years or more, one, gang control of public spaces plummets, gang violence drops faster and more steeply than general declines in crime and does so with far fewer arrests. Zones safety improves more and stays longer. Criminogenic conditions recede and residents of public housing projects, where this model was first pioneered, report trust with community safety partnership officers from LAPD, but not other LAPD police officers. You have higher crime clearance rates and astoundingly, evaluations of professionally trained gang interventionists, showed their work produced a 95%

reduction in retaliation shootings, saved LA County over \$120 million in inverted homicides over a two year period and eliminated shooting sprees on hospitals and ambulances.

Connie Rice:

LAPD Chief's Bratton, Beck and more, agree the model worked and LAPD as a result, just set up the only full policing bureau for community safety and partnership. Sustainability right now is hanging by a thread because of the pandemic, the model needs reinforcement. Four conclusions from this experience, non-strategic wars, a counterproductive approach for solving complex problems that pose epidemic threats like epidemic gang violence, homelessness, terrorism, or climate crisis. Two, complex problems that have morphed into epidemic threats require comprehensive long-term cross sector cooperation by the whole of government, academia, philanthropy and society. Third, this kind of all hands on deck problem solving requires extraordinary mission oriented leadership from the world of police, gangs, government, public health, education, philanthropy, academe, and business. And forth, solving complex threats require sustaining unlikely alliances and forcing politicians to accept data-driven, long-term solutions that they can't take a bow for. Thank you.