

10.15.25 Webinar | Policy, Practice, and Power: Transforming Gang Structures for Community Healing

Presented by S4A [Systems Alignment Innovation Hub](#)'s Equity Capacity Building Grantee Thomas Cotton III of Redemption & Advancement Alliance with commentary by Dr. Larry Washington of BECOME.

- **What can be done on a policy level to support movements like this? This reminds me of the impacts the Black Panther Party had (though they were not a gang, but seen as one; what parallels do you see as well, if any?)**
 - Supporting movements like the New G Movement requires adopting a new policy perspective that understands transformation begins with redevelopment rather than dismantling. For too long, gangs have been seen solely as criminal threats, ignoring their emergence as adaptive social structures formed in response to exclusion, disinvestment, and systemic neglect. Effective policy should prioritize redevelopment over removal by investing in social infrastructure to restore opportunity and belonging. This includes developing leadership pathways for credible messengers with lived experience to act as community change agents, providing integrated family and mental health support that reflect modern realities and redefine family beyond the two-parent ideal, creating education and workforce policies that facilitate pathways from incarceration to innovation, and implementing public health strategies that treat violence reduction, trauma healing, and economic opportunity as interconnected goals. Historically, the Black Panther Party demonstrated a similar approach. The Panthers established schools, breakfast programs, and health clinics in neglected communities, proving that organized, disciplined, community-led movements can deliver services often absent from public systems. The same principle holds today: policy should allocate resources to community governance and support transforming what was once feared into a foundation for safety, health, and opportunity.
- **How do you recommend getting involvement from gang members to work towards this redevelopment? It is hard to build that trust as an "outsider" and most will avoid involvement because they believe the goal is dismantling of the system that is important in their lives.**
 - We understand that this process will take time. We also must demonstrate that the system is a viable alternative. Redevelopment is impossible without trust, and trust cannot be outsourced. The New G Movement is led by those who have lived within the circle of credibility. We understand the language, loyalty, and lived experiences that shape the culture. Engagement begins with meeting people where they are, not where outsiders want them to be. When individuals recognize that this movement is not an attempt to dismantle who they are but to redeem what their unity was meant to represent, trust becomes possible. The pathway forward reframes the existing bonds of loyalty and discipline into vehicles for purpose and peace. By linking personal transformation with entrepreneurship, education, and civic engagement, we are not asking people to abandon their structures; rather, we are redeveloping them into life-giving ones. Not everyone will get on board, and that's okay. We're targeting those seeking something new, and there are plenty of them.

- **Because gang has such a negative connotation shouldn't we as leaders do our best to reframe the association in effort to disassociate negative stigmas that have been placed on black and Latino "gangs" specifically? Especially understanding the origin of phraseology and its intent was to increase the mass incarceration of those populations**
 - At the heart of what we are doing is not to dismantle gangs. Coming in and trying to reframe gangs will be thought of as dismantling. Rather than abandoning or renaming the word 'gang', the task before us is to redeem its meaning. At its core, the term represents unity, protection, and collective strength, which are values that were distorted by conditions of poverty, exclusion, and systemic racism. This core has been lost but not destroyed. To strip away the name would be to erase a lineage of survival and resilience within gang communities. What must change is not the name, but the function and purpose of that unity. When the structure that once produced violence begins to produce vision, the narrative naturally shifts. For example, the name Christian, which refers to followers of Christ, has been misused for centuries. Despite this, there is still no strong movement from the true followers to change it, as it retains a redeeming quality. Therefore, the reframing of the name gang is not just cosmetic; it is cultural redevelopment. Through visible transformation, storytelling, and systemic alignment, the same energy that once fueled destruction can now fuel destiny. The New G Movement demonstrates that the power to rebuild communities has always been within those who were once dismissed as the problem. The difference now is that they are recognized as the solution.



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