

EDITORS' NOTE

In her rhetorical essay, Liliana Cervantes makes many claims relating to gang violence. What are her strongest claims, and which rhetorical appeals make them strong (ethos, pathos, logos)? In other words, are her claims fully supported with her statistics (logos) and personal experience (ethos)? When you started reading Cervantes's essay did you think the author was going to make a suggestion to solve the ethical problem posed? Does Cervantes's choice to offer a solution enhance her argument?

How would an annotated bibliography, like the one Cervantes includes, help you do research for your rhetorical essay? What are the advantages of using an annotated bibliography instead of a traditional Works Cited page? Cervantes provides a writer's note, which your instructor may also require of you. How does the note help you understand the passion she feels about the topic, as well as the choices she made as a writer?

WRITER'S NOTE

Writing this paper meant a lot to me because I recently lost a friend to gang violence. I used his story in my introduction as my pathos to grab the audience's attention, but also to make them realize gang violence is an issue that should be dealt with. I used logos to show the rise in violence and the rise of membership in gangs over the years. The numbers are still rising even with the prevention, intervention, and suppression programs that are out now. I used ethos by mentioning work by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and by mentioning the people's occupations after using their ideas and evidence to develop stable support for my ideas.

Save Their Lives, Save Their Futures

Liliana Cervantes

Marco Reyes did not even turn twenty before a bullet, not intended for him, took his life. He is just one of many who has fallen victim to this endless, violent, abrupt crime. If his brother had not been a gang member, he would not have had problems with rivaling gangs. If Marco had not been around that lifestyle, around those types of people, none of this would have occurred; no innocent life would have been lost. Unfortunately Marco was around all this; it was his only option with no way out. Many adolescents seem to be born into this sad lifestyle and do not see an alternative. To them, becoming something more than just a gang member is surviving through all the violence and gaining respect. They strive to be one of the big guys who is feared and greatly respected. Violence is a major contributor to deaths amongst teens, even more if gang related. The 2009 National Gang Threat Assessment reports that 58 percent of state and local law enforcement agencies reported active criminal gangs in their jurisdictions in 2008 compared with 45 percent of state and local agencies in 2004 and 80 percent of the crime activity committed in the communities is by gangs (iii). Instead of going to school and receiving an education, these kids are out "hustling" in the streets, committing crimes, are involved in theft, auto theft, assaults, and even tragic murders. If only they had a place to go where they can actually improve themselves and not worsen themselves as they do in prison. A place where they realize that the gang life is not the one they want to live. Somewhere where

they can get help to get back on their feet, go to school, get a job, have many people who care around them to listen and guide them to prepare them to become something more than a delinquent. The community, as well as the state, should be more concerned about finding ways to help our youth and keep them away from such brutal violence.

Gangs are seen as a second family by teens. The attorney general of the Crime and Violence Prevention Center, Daniel E. Lungren, explains teens receive the support and attention from gangs that they were and/are deprived of while growing up (12). When a child is not being cared for or shown love, compassion, or support, they feel the need to rebel and get it elsewhere. It is more common for a child in a less fortunate family to be attracted to the gang lifestyle. The gang then poses as a second family and claims they will not leave anyone behind. When they are not doing well in school or feel they do not fit in with their peers, they turn to gangs. They feel they have more in common with that type of crowd than with their peers at school. When they commit a crime for initiation or get jumped in by the gang, the members then show respect and support to the new member.

Gangs emit an image of status, respect, control, hierarchy, protection, and reputation that teens desire to be a part of to feel “accepted” in our society. What they don’t realize at the moment is the danger that gangs bring and the self-destruction they will undergo the moment they become a member of a gang. According to Lungren, teens not only endanger themselves but also the loved ones surrounding them, the people who live in their neighborhoods, or whoever is around them as they step outside onto the streets (6–8). Innocent people become targets to unnecessary violent crimes committed by gang members. They do not care if their neighbor or the seven year old girl or even if their friend’s mother gets shot by an intended bullet that was for them. “A rival gang sometimes identifies everyone in the neighborhood as a potential threat . . . in this way, innocent residents are often subjected to gang violence (Lungren 8). Just by living in a place where gangs exist, the people of the community have a higher risk to be innocent bystanders who fall victims to criminal activity. Lungren argues that the community should no longer ignore the presence gangs. They have spread throughout California from rural to suburban areas. More people are being at risk, so the community should work together and get involved to *prevent* violence (Lungren general message). This was said in 1994 in a Community Response pamphlet. There has been a rise of criminal activity committed by gangs since then. The FBI’s Supplementary Homicide Reports shows that the percentage of all gang related homicides in 1994 was 5.7 which rose to 6.9 in 2002 and all the gang related homicides with firearms in 1994 was 7.5 which rose to 9.9 in 2002 (2). If prevention is the key in controlling gangs then why has not much improved since the prevention, interventions, and suppression programs were put into motion (Lungren 1)?

The problem with the youth these days is they have little self-desire to do or be involved in organizations, clubs, sports, or activities that are not emphasized by the media or fad. They will not do anything or commit to anything if it is not mandatory to do so. They will more likely finish a project or go to church if they are being compensated in the end. Teens hardly do anything out of their own good will or because of desire for self-improvement. In the end, having these optional programs to prevent youth from joining gangs or preventing gang violence are useless. Many gang members prefer to be incarcerated than to participate in such programs when given the option in court. The senior policy associate for juvenile justice, Lynn White believes “the over-incarceration of youth is one of the major crises facing our communities” and wants to see “policy shift the paradigm to focus on prevention, not incarceration” (qtd. in Leftwich par. 3). In prison, youth learn more and become more involved with criminal gang

activity because prison gangs run the street gangs. Adolescents are not taking the incarceration sentences as punishments; instead, they are gaining reputation and status.

My solution is to have mandatory intervention programs that house adolescents profiled and enlisted as gang members by local police departments. These programs can be funded in many ways; by having celebrities or corporation as sponsors, using the money that was used to house gang members in jail to pay for the housing of adolescent gang members, and widespread of fundraiser and throughout California. A newspaper article written by Steve Gravelle says the approximate cost to house a juvenile in jail is 235 dollars a day (par. 18). Teens will be obligated to live in a home where they will be with other gang members receiving help from law enforcement, lawyers, teachers, mentors, psychiatrists, and previous gang members. Time Magazine reported McMansions being stuck on the housing markets because of their immense size (Kiviat par.1). Government officials could use these homes to house the youth and begin their intervention. Many of these homes are being used to house autistic adults; why not try to help our youth to save themselves. Lawmaker Bobby Scott, “introduced legislation that aims to rehabilitate youth rather than incarcerate them” (qtd. in Leftwich par. 4). Passing this legislation will put forth the intervention programs. Placing gang members in these homes and undergoing the interventions will help them change their perspectives on life, school, future, and family. They will recognize the danger they face by being in a gang and the risks they set for the neighborhoods, families, friends, and peers.

It is obvious by the statistics above that violence committed by gangs as increased over the years. Prevention programs have not been enough to cut the rates of homicides, burglaries, auto theft, etc. Teens are not interested in seeking help, therefore the community, parents, teachers, law enforcement, local officials, and government should be more concerned in wanting to help our future generation. They are our future teachers, scientists, doctors, and presidents. Why are we not anxious on doing anything to save the potential these children hold? Forcing them into gangs, forcing them into the jail systems is just corrupting their lives. Why not force them into a positive environment where they will want to change. To stop the violence, we all need to *want* to intervene.

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ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Gravelle, Steve. “Linn County Rethinks Strategy for Low-Risk Juvenile Offenders.” *Gazette Online* 8 Oct. 2009. 17 Nov 2009 <www.gazetteonline.com>.

This article is about the number of inmates in the jail system. It says they are low offenders who go to jail who should not be there because then they mixed with high-level offenders. Some juvenile detention centers want to keep youth away from those high-level offenders. It gives two solutions to not incarcerating low-level offenders: serving time on weekends or house arrest.

I chose this article because it gave me the information I needed to prove it cost a lot of money to house a juvenile in jail. That money could be going to a better program that can work more towards helping the youth.

Kiviat, Barbara. “Reinventing the McMansion.” *Time Magazine* 28 Sept. 2009. 12 Nov. 2009. <www.time.com>.

McMansions are not finding to be what house buyers are looking for. They are beautiful homes about 4,000 to 6,000 square feet big. Many people around the world are dwelling on ideas with the

uses these houses can emit. In San Diego some McMansions are being used to house autistic adults and others to film movies. Some think the houses are too large and cause families to separate. Some potential buyers in Australia actually want to destroy and rebuild these homes into two. In Ohio a group wants to use some as greenhouses. These houses are also thought to be great to teach life lessons such as laundry and cooking.

This article gave me the idea of using these homes for intervention programs for gang members. Almost in all houses, each bedroom has its own bathroom; depending on the number of rooms in the house, adolescents that are involved in gangs can be housed there to begin their intervention program. They will be living in a small group with a group of adults who will be helping them throughout the process. The money to buy such homes and fund the intervention programs can be fundraised and sponsored through by a celebrity who really wants to help stop all the violence these younger generations are falling victims to. All the money that will be saved by not incarcerating the gang members to jail can also be used towards the programs.

Leftwich, Siobhan. "Legislation Hopes to Help Gang Members." *Crisis (15591573)* 115.2 (2008): 9. *Academic Search Elite*. Robert E. Kennedy Library, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, Ca. 17 Nov 2009 <<http://xerxes.calstate.edu/>>.

This article is about the Children's Defense Fund and representatives wanting to help gang members with prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies. They want to lower the adult offenses adolescents are charged with. They would rather rehabilitate youth instead of giving them jail time. They speak of a bill called the youth Promise Act proposed by Bobby Scott to help gang members.

I chose to use this article because I also feel incarcerating young gang members is not a good idea. Many teens that leave jail come out worse than how they were before they went to jail.

Lungren, Daniel E. *Gangs: A Community Response*. Sacramento: Crime and Violence Prevention Center, 1994.

This book tells what a gang is, what they do, the prevention and interventions programs that are available, anti-gang laws. Gangs are involved in criminal activity, homicides, drive-by shootings, drugs, theft, and much more. It is stated that community members and local government officials should be more involved in trying to prevent gang violence. They should learn to identify the gang affiliation and from there start to take action in stopping the violence. When they commit an act, a lot of innocent people fall victims. It speaks greatly on how parents can prevent gang affiliation when their children are young. They can be put in before or after school programs, education on gang prevention programs, employment opportunities, and community and law enforcement programs. The anti-gang laws are harsher punishments if you are identified as a gang member, commit a crime, commit a murder, commit auto theft, possession of arms or drugs, etc; misdemeanor or felonies depending on active participation in a gang and the use of coercion to participate in a gang.

This source talks a lot about prevention. Really prevention only helps in the early signs when the adolescents are young. Once already in a gang they will have no respect for a parent or guardian and do as they wish. They will not voluntarily go to these prevention programs or change their minds of dropping out of a gang unless they have a miraculous life changing experience. They feed of intimidation, power, money, drugs, and reputation. I feel prevention programs will not help in stopping gang violence so more should be done to intervene. These gang members should be put into mandatory intervention programs to help the youth in our generation. All those prevention programs and the numbers are still rising. Prevention is not enough.

United States. Dept. of Justice. Bureau of Justice Statistics. *Violence by Gang Members, 1993–2003*. June 2005. 17 Nov. 2009 <<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/>>.

This article is mostly statistics on gang violence committed since 1993 through 2003. It shows percentages in crimes such as rapes/sexual assaults, homicides, homicides with weapons, robbery, aggravated assaults, etc. It has information on the different percentages of victims reporting their assaults or violent acts being committed by Hispanic or non-Hispanic gang members.

I used this source because it had statistics that supported my claim of crimes committed by gangs has risen since 1994.

United States. Dept. of National Gang Intelligence Center. Federal Bureau of Investigation. *2009 National Gang Threat Assessment*. Jan. 2009. 17 Nov 2009 <<http://www.fbi.gov/>>.

This assessment is on the data analyzed by 2008 National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC), National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) data, and the Department of National Gang Intelligence Center about the threats gangs place on communities. It has statistics of how many active gangs and gang members, violence and crimes committed by gangs the type of gangs, regions where most gangs are found, and strategic objectives to decrease the threats.

I used this assessment because it was by the FBI and it supported my theory of the rise of gangs and gang members in the United States over the years.