

California

LOS ANGELES DAILY JOURNAL • FRIDAY, AUGUST 1, 2008 • PAGE 2

He predicted that Rao Ongaro would work to cost less.

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Gang Intervention Experts Discuss Techniques

By Greg Katz

Daily Journal Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES — Most mediations center around justice, money and relationships.

But for mediators intervening in gang conflicts, there also can be lives on the line. And special techniques are required for those disputes.

Those techniques will be the subject of a town hall meeting Monday, when leaders of Los Angeles' best-known gang intervention programs will gather to talk about ways to defuse tension between gangs in a city that, according to some estimates, is home to 40,000 gang members.

The discussion, "Actual Practices in Gang Intervention," will convene at 6:30 p.m. at the Western Justice Center in Pasadena. It is one in the center's occasional "Peacebuilding Brownbag and Townhall" series.

"Right now in L.A., gang intervention is top-of-mind, so we're trying to meet the needs of the community as they're being expressed at the moment," said Angela Oh, the Western Justice Center Founda-

tion's interim executive director and of counsel to Los Angeles firm Bird Marella Boxer Wolpert Nessim Dooks & Lincenberg.

Oh said she frequently hears from those involved in intervention programs that there is a need for group discussion.

"People who are involved in trying to do violence prevention work are interested in hearing from people doing frontline intervention," she said.

Speakers will include Robert "Bobby" Arias and William "Blinky" Rodriguez of Communities in Schools, one of the programs at the heart of the city's L.A. Bridges intervention effort; Aquil Basheer, founder of Maximum Force Enterprises; Ansar "Stan" Muhammad, executive director of Venice 2000; Alex Sanchez of Homies Unidos, which stages intervention efforts here and in El Salvador; and Noreen McClendon of Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles.

"These individuals have many years of working with youth and

working with their communities, and they are interested in having a place where a dialogue can happen that's very deliberately focused on approaches," Oh said.

The center, created in the 1980s by a group of 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals judges, has partnered with the police, community groups and schools to advance efforts to thwart youth violence. It also consults with former gang members about intervention efforts.

Previous events in the center's peacebuilding series have focused on gang policy, school mediation programs and police-community relations. Future events, Oh said, will include a nuclear disarmament negotiator, an Israeli Special Forces commander and a Zen master.

"The series hopefully will give people an opportunity to really think deeply about what it means to try and work toward peace," she said.

The program is free. More information is available at westernjustice.org.

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