

Grayson Enterprises Ltd. First NA Serial Rights
page 1 Copyright 1989
 1,500 words

FRANCES SANDOVAL:FOUNDER OF MOTHERS AGAINST GANGS

Written by June Grayson

Photographed by Richard Grayson

You notice first how small she is and how gentle, hardly an intimidating presence. You have to listen carefully because she speaks so softly. She stops to embrace a friend, a mother whose son was also a victim of gang violence. She wears a black and white button that says: Mothers Against Gangs. She is here to present the awards at the first anniversary meeting of the Aurora Chapter of Mothers Against Gangs. Meet Frances Sandoval, the founder of Mothers Against Gangs and the leader of this new grassroots movement to break the power of gangs.

She is beautiful - not only physical beauty, though she has that too - but the inner glow of someone who cares passionately about others and never tires of serving them. She revives your faith in the power of the old religious virtues. She proves that one person can, indeed, make a difference.

Sandoval, born in Chicago of Mexican parents, formed Mothers Against Gangs in 1986 after her 15 year old son was brutally murdered by a gang member.

On ??<> ARthur Sandoval went with a freinds.

Even though oterh gagns mebmers identified the killer, police did not act to find him. they told her it wasn't important. Sandvoal ahd to do all fo the work herself. It was not until she went on local Hispanci television and offered a \$1,000 reward that informantss came forth and gave infrmatin elading t the arrest f the guilty gang meber nly a few locks frm where ARthur's killing td place. Sandval did nt rest until he was arrested, treid, and cnvicted fr ARthur's murder. HE is nw serving a et35 year sentence fr the crime.

Her struggle for justice sensitized her to the plight of other mothers who had lost chidlren to gang violence.

Compared to other mothers, though I was lucky because I knew my legal rights. I was determined not to give up until Arthur's killer was found and brought to justice.

Sandoval quit high school in 19?? to marry and have three children. After her divorce she returned to school to get her general equivalency degree, study communications in college, and return to her community to work at a Spanish newspaper. Now she works full time as administrative assistant to Juan Soliz, alderman of Chicago's 25th precinct in the heart of Chicago and the Pilsen neighborhood in Chicago's ? district. She understands Chicago and what it takes to get things done. "In the midst of my own suffering, I met all of these other suffering mothers who had no one to tell them their rights and help them after their children became gang members.

"I had heard about MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and I thought, there is no difference, our children are victims too," Sandoval says.

Sandoval modeled Mothers Against Gangs on MADD's charter and bylaws. There is no connection between the two organizations.

Who did she get a grant from. Who gave legal help. "there have always been gangs in Chicago, But the senseless violence is new

and increasing. We must stop this senseless violence before more of our children are destroyed, Sandoval says.

Port services to mothers who have lost children to gang violence as well as mothers who have children in gangs, and advocacy through the legal system.

Sandoval is proud that MAG helped in the successful campaign for the passage of the Illinois Safe School Zone Act, the law that permits juveniles to be tried as adults if they are charged with drug trafficking or using weapons in a school or within 1,000 feet of a school.

Because Frances experienced this pain and loneliness herself after Arthur's murder, she was able to identify with all of the other victims and their families who suffered from gang violence. "When you are a victim of gang violence in Chicago," Jesse Gonzales, the executive director of Chicago's Mothers Against Gangs office, explains, "You have to go into court and go through preliminary hearings, you may not even understand English, and you don't even know what the law is. The police may make insinuations that your daughter or son was involved with the gangs and that is why he or she was attacked. This is not always the case. Innocent victims do suffer. So Mothers Against Gangs will meet with the families, support them emotionally, explain to

them their rights and that they have the right to demand that the law be responsive to their needs. Mothers AGainst Gagns members will go into court with them and trasnlate for them, and that community pressure makes the police and courts more responsive to the victim's rights."

distinction of ranking number 2, after Los Angeles, in the number of gang related murders. Yet, in 1986, without any hope of success, Sandoval stepped out in faith and determination. She started a new organization, Mother Against Gangs. Every war has its turning point, that historians can look back to and say, yes, that is when the turnaround started. We didn't know it then, but that was when the tide of battle turned in our favor. Already, members of some communities, where Mothers AGainst Gagns has been working, says they see the turnaround.

The blacks have Rosa Parks, who started the victorious civil rights moement. Now the Hispanics ahve Frances Sandoval, who some dare to hope has started the turnaround against gang control of o22igrant.ur cities and our young people.

gal
In 1985, Arthur Sandoval, 13, and his sister, explain what happened here.

Sandoval has a mission - to bring peace to the

neighborhoods. She is nto out to avenge her son's death.

Young newcomers to an area are vespecially vulnerable to && gang recruitment. The gang member who stabbed ARthur was an illegal immigrant. Sandoval feels that the gang used him to do their dirty work. They told him what to do - go stab him.

he mother must make it clear to her child. I love you but not as a gang member. She must withdraw her support. It doesn't seem like a big thing, byt Sandoval thinks it is effective.

When MAG members go to court with the victim's family, they won't fee l so alone. The judge and gang members will see that they aren't alone. They will say - oh, oh, the mothers are here, and they will be more careful.

/sabndoval was in court twelve times while she attemptped to bring ARthur's kilelrs to justice.

Sometimes after a violent crime, no one informs the victims or their families of their legal and compensatory rights. MAG members help them get what is coming to them.

sANDOVAL STARTED HER war with a special attack against gang graffiti. You go to school to learn, not to see a gang symbol at the school, day after day. The schools must not allow it.

They promote more police coopration. Most families felt uninformmed about police action. <Mag ,members help monitor

police progress in pursuing gang offenders.

2ag promotes education about gangs,.. so that young kids no longer think they are cool or that they have to join. the tell the kids, gang membership gives you a false sense fo saftey. If you beocme a gang member, you will either kill or be killed eventually. Is that safe? Is that cool?

Besides showing the bad side of gang membership, MAG encourages the school and parents `to offer more after,school activities so that kids iwll have a positive alternative.

Xhe graduated from Loop Junior College, worked in data processing, rked at a spanish language new d at a spanish newspaper, worked as a court interpreter, elghsin spanish, worked witht he Legal assistnace foundation of Chciago which helps indigents. She has alwyas been involved in community activcities. She currently works for Juan Psoliz,

You might even think that fate was preapreing her for her tasks.

Most people don't know there is such a think as crime victims compensation. The problem is that they don't have any family cousneling when someone dies.

Satistic on gang meurders. two a week, for years and yeas and years.

Why of all of the hurt families, was she othe one able to do

soemthing.

When you know in yoru ehart that something is right, and then you don't ask anyone what to do, you don't try to detemrine in you will success, then no matter what anyone tells you, then you have to proceed.

I have always felt confident inside myself, because I know I am doing my best aI am happy and content.

I will be honest with you, even if my son had not died, I would have had ot do this. Because tthe violence is wrong. The senseless killing is wrongl..

Last winter she did two interviews on a liami local spanish station about MAg. A Marian Cortez, Hollywood police officer with the gang crime until they now have a spinoff. Neighfbros against gangs.

Any state can start its own organization. We only have a state charterother copmmunities can linn you first start an organization you feel like how can ye up with Mag in Illinois u even start. The more I hear, neighbors agianst gangs, apreints agaisnt gangs, I would like to hear students against gangs.

turing around public opneionas to cigarettes adn drink driving.

I really believe that public opinion can turn thigns around ieven if you were invovled in a gang murmeder it was on 2 6to

100-

the gang members could say, he love to be taken befoe we start
ked some sinmeibe U jbeww U tgiygg he was oging to cill me
so the police nad ourts didn't treat it seriously
the gags knew they could get away with it
\$ust got a slap on the wristity
out in a yearhen
they bevsamr hrtord in ptidont he 60s
Ig MSg hs had anye ffect
there is already a change in the chidlren noweposnbilities

\$venile rights, started 10 eyars ago.

they have ot take repsonsibility
it is not jsut hispanics.

gangs do not discriminate

no color barriers, no ehtnic barriers.

all classes all colors

gangs cine 1930,
p.
mag is going thing,

os2

because the mmessage is coming out
it is ocming out of the court system nowt up. and who may belong.

evenb the gang members are saying, careful, don't hit no innocent

vicitioms becauys that mneans 30-40 years in jail

It sends a message nback to the communityur chapters, and two
why a chagne now
thes tates attorneys office has delveoped a gang prosecution

division 7 eyars ago
becasue things got out of hand
so many #sdie of Chiago and Steriling, a country town almost to
2 s dying elft nad right

no one would come forward
scared
they developed witness protection Aurora: Rebbecca Herrera,
community at large put pressure on the police and the courts.
we are changing but we haven't changed enough
gang member has just gotten the death penalty for his crime
we are hoping that they may form their own organizations

Mothers Against Gangs. although the MAG charter just applies
for Illinois. There have been spinoffs of similar organizations
like even in Chicago - Neighbors Against Gangs and parents Against
Gangs.

Explain about Hollywood Florida and how she will go there.

MAG is not the first community organization to address the
problem of gang violence. According to Sister Leticia Gomez, a
Chicana and member of the Catholic Lay Sisters of Christian
Communities, the Concerned Parents of the Soledad Enrichment
Action, (SEA) began sixteen years ago and has grown to five
locations in the Los Angeles area. They seek to educate,
empower, and enable concerned parents help their children resist
gang membership, thus reducing gang violence in the East Los
Angeles area.

Mothers Against Gangs shows mothers how to focus their
awesome power. "Everyone has a mother, right? Sandoval says.
"Kids, even gang members, love their mothers. When mothers learn
how to assume their responsibilities, using tough love and even

kicking their kids out of the house if they don't obey the house rules, they can effect changes they never thought possible."

According to Anthony De Marco, supervisor of the North Central Illinois Narcotic Task force, says, "I know of only one country in the world today that has made a dent in the drug problem. In Malaysia, anyone caught dealing drugs is immediately hanged. Our judicial system is overburdened and the punishment no longer fits the crime. An organization such as Mothers Against Gangs can put pressure on our courts to enforce our laws. Our political system will respond to community involvement when it has to, it is just a function of time."

Dr. Felix Padilla, Cuban professor of sociology and director of the Center for Hispanic Research, DePaul University, Chicago, is studying the relationship between Chicago street gangs and drug dealing. "The increase in street gangs, drug dealings, and violence may be related to a new economic phenomenon: the shutting out of our ghetto youth from the labor market," Padilla says. "Always before in our country's history, the lowly and dispossessed have been able to work themselves up the economic ladder and out into the mainstream of society. These kids aren't dumb. There are no neighborhood factory and laboring jobs.

In that respect, gangs function as an alternative employer and underground economy."

According to Dr. Richard Martin, head of the department of criminal justice at Aurora University, Aurora, some gang members can leave the gangs by going to college. "They make it out through athletic ability or they are lucky enough to have a caring high school counselor. They tell me they can return to their old neighborhoods to visit and the gangs don't bother them. Some former gang members seem to respect them because they were able to get out. Of course, there is no place for them in their old home."

Thousands of children all over America have been victims of gang violence. Thousands of mothers have wept and are still weeping bitter tears. Yet Sandoval was able to transmute her personal anguish into effective action.

"If my children had not been there for me, if my family had not been there for me," Sandoval explains, "There would be no Frances Sandoval today and no Mothers Against Gangs.

"Many Hispanic women have no support. I was fortunate. I also had my priest who was my psychologist, my psychiatrist, my everything. One has to deal with unbearable pain and overwhelming guilt.

"People have to understand that gang violence is not just simple manslaughter and murder. It is the destruction of entire families. It is terrorism against the entire community - against the entire country.

Murder rates in the big cities continue to rise. Officials blame drugs, gangs, and guns for the escalating crisis.

"I remember so clearly how it was before Arthur died. My three children would sit on the front steps and wait for my car to drive up. Then they would come running to meet me and I would smile.

"Three months after Arthur's murder, I pulled up and parked my car. My other son, who was then ten years old, came running and said - oh, Mommy, you are smiling, you haven't smiled at me since Arthur died. I thought - oh, my God, I have deprived my son, who is also hurting and missing his brother, of even his mother's smile.

"When you know in your heart you are right, you have to usght for what needs to be done, no matter what the cost. It is the time is ripe for a signal from the courts and the judges that our communities will no longer allow this behavior that simple."

judges should have no other alternative but to preside and entence and take into considieration the tragedy that is affecting

the entire city of Chicago as well as the rest of the nation
the human tragedy
we must have the death penalty for these crimes that are so
unspeakable. They are not only 2nd orders and arson, they are acts of
terrorism against a whole civilization.

if you want to start a unit.

they come to me

we ask them to identify the problem first

we have questionnaires. every neighborhood has a different problem

you don't come to our downtown office

you go into the community where it is occurring

where the problem is

have a community meeting, a planning meeting

at a church school or home

discuss what needs to be done,

what is the problem

is the gang activity excessive

are weapons being carried.

MAG will be presented depending on where it is
% feel they have to belong to a gang for protection

it is dangerous for a child to try to resist the gangs if he

doesn't have an it happens is that the parents need an education,

they have to aware of adult to go to.

what is relaly going on.

it is not enough to say, now don't you get invovled in a gang.

a child might say, Mom, I don't want to go to that store, don't

mkae me.

and the mother things he is jstu being stubbonr and she makes him

go

she doens't know that what he is really trying to say is that a

ganging is haning out inf front of that store, and everytime I go

there, they ask em what I be about

so if the child can't go to an adult he can trust, he will try ot

negotiate it himself

whell hwo can an adult negotiate sfaegtl.

it is not against the law to belong to a gang.

however, when someone threatnes you with bodily harm, that is a

felony and that is agaisnt the law.

what good does it do to have laws if theyare not enforced.

so the kid tells his mother they are oging to beat him up

she has to report it to the police.

Then MAG will put pressure on the police if they don't act.

no, in most situations the police are acting.

if they are not acting, we want to know about it.

that's why we have our community speakers and elders.

It is very important to let the parents know they have rights.

that if you call the police and no one comes, that is wrong.
you have a right for the police to come and for police

protection.

it is good to have an organization there to remind the police
don't know what is in the background of some of these worst gang

members.

how do we know until we report him how mayh
that they have duties.

the police have to act.

they can't allow an act of intimidation.

those kids must be arrested

see, the problem is that the parents don't know their rights.

%

we are hoping that that will change.

some crimes are too

times that member has been in trouble before

maybe now the police will have enough on him to get him off the

street.

According to Officer Robert Honegger, it is important for a community to recognize a problem early and for everyone to work together to solve it.

I think that Mrs. Sandeval coming out here was the motivator to start something going in our community.

The city and police had already established a group that was meeting. She motivated the parents, especially, to get involved and gave them some good practical ideas about what to do.

The awareness taught by mag helped a lot. The parent and adult education. It helped them understand what they could do to counter the gangs.

The pressure was put back on the kids. hey, if you are going to get involved in gangs, you are going down the wrong street the parents were able to demonstrate that to the kids, that it was a dead end.

we still have gangs, but they don't have as many followers now.

mag will have to remain active, however, the big mistake is when people don't want to acknowledge the problem. and won't deal with it. It won't go away by itself.

Rebecca Herrera, & lived in Sterling all her life, always been in community activities. started becoming aware of gang activities in 1985-1986. I worked in a head start program and families had older children. Teens always like me, don't see me as a threat.

The police and the city administration had started a task force. Lots of people in our community would not believe that we could have a problem with gangs. Finally it became unavoidable, graffiti in the school bathrooms on notebooks.

I heard from the kids directly, the graffiti, the drinking parties, and then the criminal activities such as burglaries.

I think the teenagers still think I am their friend. I approach it that I am not trying to get rid of the gangs, but just see that the community offers options to our children.

organized May in summer of 1988 had a community meeting in June, 1988, asked the public to come, France was here, cuts across all racial and ethnic lines,
u

we have large population of Hispanics, blacks and orientals. I think economics had a lot to do with it. There are lots of

activities in our community for children and teenagers, but if

you are public aid, you don't have those two or three extra

dollars it takes to get in 1 things. Now our community is

getting better economically.

Frances came down 2 times to get us started. We have a core of

about 8 women that do the most work. But lots of people all over

town, who don't come to the meetings all of the time, still

support our activities, they will be chaperones.

we paint over graffiti,

we sponsor fun days at the rec center.

the community donates the referrals.

we are not looking at getting the hard core gang members out.

we are looking to influence the peripheral members, but those

who are not so involved and brainwashed that they think the gang

is their whole life.

we only have a few such hard core members in Sterling.

truly believe that the others just want to feel they belong to

something or they are afraid of getting beaten up.

I think a lot has to do with the parent education program

word of mouth

newspaper articles

we tell the parents know

we parents let everyone know that we are not going to give up our kids to the gangs, they are ours,

we saw results right away.

even have gang members helping us with the painting. what a nice experience.

Gang membership has fallen off because they are not getting the fifth and sixth graders coming up.

kids become gang members in the 6, 7 8 years.

so if we get them in the fifth and sixth grade and can protect them

until they are in high school, then they see the end of the

tunnel.

they know they want to do something with their lives.

once we got the support of all of the parents

next interview with Chief Robert Brent, chief of Police Aurora

Aurora started having gang problems about 1980-1981, real and

started to blossom in the collar counties to Chicago

we were concerned that the only way we were going to be able to

deal with the problem was through a grass roots effort.

has thto invovle the entire community not just the police depart
roblem is to be repsolved will take close copeation.

ommunication betweenwe have alrge police and comm

we are very encouraged by Mag's earliest organization meetings

we appointed one of our officers to be a liasonresults depend on

who you ask and theri viewpoint.

my eprsonal feeling based on what the officers in the dept tell

me and what I see form police reports, is that therehas been a

hery on whether they should be gang members or not

along with other community efforts I think MAg has helped turn
around thes periphery kids.

now a lot of kids see that gang life is not that wonderful and
exciting, but filled with problems and they have decided to not

join.

two groups of kids

the hardcore members

the periphery kids.

mags greatest impact certaing has been with thsoe kids on the

periphery, working with families abnd younger borhters and

sisters.

brings to the community the real message about how destructive

gangs really are

that helps with the hardcore members too

what I am hearing back from the officers is that there is not a

lot of new recruitment

now we have to keep the community together in working toward the

goal of releasing the hardcore members

we need to mag to help us do that too

but her mag seems not effective in dealing with the families

of gang members

I think mother to mother communication very important
certainly good for parents and families who already have kids

involved in gangs.

some of these so called hardcore members can be redeemed too

that is one of the reasons the kids don't opt out of gangs, once

they get in, they feel stuck

!that is why we felt from the start that it is most important to

cut off the market, the supply of new gang members before they
get totally committed.

how can you help the hardcore members

offer them support, certainly we cannot provide 24 hour police
security and that sort of thing

but the support and encouragement from family, friends, teachers,
organizations such as mag play an important part

there is a perceived fear that you can't get out of gangs.

that is not to say they it does not happen that they get beat one
sometimes

however, we have also had a lot of kids who have left the gangs
that that never happened to

w

no law violation to be a gang member
but we try to target the ringleaders, the ones involved in

violence, the leadership
and make appropriate arrests for any illegal activity they are

involved in

co8urts out here cooeprative.

Sandoval is fighting a difficult battle in Chicago because their

stree t gangs have been active for 40 years.

1 about 80-81

I think mag is an excellent group, theyare doing a grea edeal

with the few resources they have to work with and we certaily

support them here in Aurora to the fulelst extnet. We have a

direct police liason

intervie with Avis Miller

immiedate past ptesident of MAG in Aurora.

mag has made an fdefinte impact in our community. Itr lets the

police and courts know that we are aware, and maybe they work

harder for us.

the one thing Ir elaly felt ogod about was some of the resources

we borught to the parents.

the momt that we help, many times don't understand our policital

system, we do a lot of family education

we tell them the police department is not always the bad guy that

parents should find out the facts and not just come out and

defend little Johnny was an angel and why are the police we pull

the parents together we realized that ours is not just an isolated

case, 2 \$sut m hosuehodl or your hosuehold

we are all in it together.

the support system is what I look for

that is the main thing that Mag accomplished

definite turnaround with those kids on the perdefinite turnaround with those kids on the per always
2

our just surgeons kids, the ones under the age of 165, don't go picking on h
I think the definite turnaround with those kids on the per
gainst Mom too quick,m.

if they're aware that MOMma is going to do some checking and not
kn
just when they're wearing something.

we don't accept everybody's doing it.

I say it is not everybody's child, you belong to me

take their word for things

at first I thought it was only happening to our black children

and I just couldn't see it.

I have met women from others chapters,

I listne to all of thes ladies.

some are whtie, some black, some Hispanic, some are rich some are

poor

it is not a racial thing

it is our kids, we got to try to save our kids.

have to keep controlling our comjmunities, go out into the

playgrounds anywaher we are needed.

In Aurora, According to Judith maves, rpesident of Aurora

MAG, MAG started a court watchdog program in whcih members

accompany the families of victims to court to offer support, and

by their presence in court, pressure the prosecutros to recommend

harsher senctencxse for gang crimes.

MA galso steers parents to the proper social agencies.

We tell the parents to get gang kids out of their house.

Dont' feed them,, do do their laundry, jsut tell them to go our

ont he streets,

at first Aurora did not want to recognize its gang probelm,

but alst january, 1988, it even helped MAG start theri chapter.

The best advice for parents wating to keep their kids ot of

gangs, to is to be there for them. Commlicate with them.

Kdis have ot get feedback,ow, I beleive that the vcicotry is

better thjey get it from their families than from gangs.
alreayd out there, I step out on faith.

we can't let those odler epople rui1 our kids through their
drugs.

Oh you have a new jacket, yo bought it, where did you get the

moneykIU didn't give y 1 21

now e don't just say, well those are nice colors,