

Gangs: Decisions & Options

Teacher's Guide

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Program Overview

This program seeks to help viewers understand that there are alternatives to joining gangs. By presenting a variety of realistic scenarios involving gangs, the program makes it clear that people always have options. No matter how bad the situation is, joining a gang is never a good choice.

The first scenario involves Tico, an impressionable youngster that two gang members pressure into committing a crime. The second scenario follows friends Tony and Marco and illustrates how gang members can bully and intimidate non-members. The third and final scenario focuses on Aleem, a troubled young man who thinks that he will inevitably end up in a gang.

Each scenario encourages viewers to think about alternatives to becoming involved in gangs.

Learning Objectives

After completing the program and participating in discussion, students will be able to:

- appreciate the ways in which gangs pressure or intimidate non-members;
- talk about the reasons why youngsters might decide to join a gang, but recognize that there are always other options; and
- recall alternatives to joining a gang.

Web Resources

Criminal Justice Resources: Gangs. Includes an extensive list of resources related to youth gang activity. <http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/crimjust/gangs.htm>.

Gangs Fact Sheet. Provides an overview of the ways in which gangs affect youth. Includes information about how gangs affect schools, as well as the roles played by guns and drugs. <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/facts/gangs.asp>.

Gang Awareness for Parents & Educators. Focuses on frequently asked questions related to youths and gang activity. <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Bluffs/9341/>.

Gangs: Awareness, Prevention, Intervention. Presents information about why people join gangs, how to recognize if a young person is at risk of joining a gang, and more. <http://www.focusas.com/Gangs.html>.

Teen Facts: Youth Gangs. Answers frequently asked questions about youth gangs.
<http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/teens/gangs.asp>.

Transcript of the Video

Part 1: Tico

Ramos: Tico, what's up, man? Where you been keepin' yourself?

Tico: I've been busy.

Ramos: The Rat Boys are still givin' you a hard time, huh? You seen your pa lately?

Tico: Nah, he don't come around no more.

Ramos: Yeah, I know how that goes. But you know, maybe it's better that way. Hey, there's Manny. Hey Manny, over here!

Manny: How's my little man? I've been lookin' for you, Tico. So, what do you say, you been thinkin' about what we was talkin' about last week?

Tico: Yeah, I been thinkin' about it.

Ramos: So what's it gonna be?

Tico: I don't know yet.

Ramos: Look, Tico, we've been all over this before. Who's gonna look out for you if it ain't gonna be your friends, huh? Tell me, who's gonna do that?

Manny: Hey, nobody, that's who.

Ramos: Like we was tellin' you last week, Tico, like family, you know? Once you're in you always got your homies to hang out with. You got someone to look out for you, man.

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Aunt Rosa: Is that you, Tico?

Tico: Yeah, it's me.

Aunt Rosa: Do your Aunt Rosa a favor. I got a splitting headache. Go in there and grab me some of my medicine, okay? Be a good boy.

Tico: I don't know why you keep calling it your medicine. It's not medicine.

Aunt Rosa: Medicine makes you feel better so it's medicine, okay? Hurry up, Tico! Just like your father. You don't wanna do something, you take your own sweet time. Never thinkin' about the other person, only thinkin' about yourself. You don't watch out, Tico, you're gonna grow up to be just like him, you know that? No good undependable loafer...dumping his kid off on me. You hear me? Just like him! Come over here and bring me my medicine!

Tico: Who's there?

Tim Harrigan: It's Tim Harrigan from Family Services.

Aunt Rosa: Tico! It's a social worker! Hide the medicine!

Tico: Just a minute, Mr. Harrigan.

Mr. Harrigan: Rosa? Tico? Are you all right in there?

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Manny: So that's what's gotta go down, Tico. You gotta prove you got the guts to be a second street Latino Lord. You know the little store on Wabansia? Me and Ramos wants to meet you there at 2:30 outside. We'll go in first, you come in about a minute later. Hang out by the cash register, okay?

Store clerk: Hi, can I help you?

Tico: Um, no, I'm just looking. I'm gonna get some milk.

Store Clerk: Over against the wall - hey! What's going on back there? Hey, you're gonna knock things over! Cut it out! Cut it out! What's wrong with you guys? You're gonna knock things over! What the heck is wrong with you? Get outta here! You heard what I said. I never wanna see you guys around here again, you understand?

Tim Harrigan: You don't really wanna do that, do you? Put it back, Tico. Put it back right now before you get in *very* big trouble...

... You don't have to be a Latino Lord. Tico, you do have a choice. Look, the Boys' Club, the Y, the Parish, they all have great summer programs. Father Gomez told me his group has been to Great America three times already this summer. You know that Boy Scout group that meets over at the fieldhouse? They're planning a camping trip later this summer. You could go along - it's not too late to sign up. The things is, Tico, you get in with a good group, and it's just like a family. Just think about this: what if I didn't happen to come in that store today? Maybe nothing. But I know that store has a gun under the counter.

Manny: Hey Tico!

Tico: Hey Manny. Hey Ramos.

Ramos: Hey, man.

Manny: You'll have to excuse Tico. We have some very important business to talk about, right Tico?

Tim Harrigan: Is that what you want, Tico? To leave with them? Is that *your* choice?

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Part 2: Tony & Marco

Tony: Hey, what's the big idea?

Razor: Wrong question, man. The question is, what do you think you guys are doing on *our* turf?

Tony: This isn't anybody's turf. This is a school. That's nobody's turf.

Razor: Yeah, see, that's all changed. The Imperials have taken over this area for the protection of the neighborhood, you understand? But I'll tell you what; we'll let you play here this one time because I can see you didn't understand about it. But if you play, you pay. How much you got on you?

Tony: I ain't got nuthin', see?

Razor: How 'bout you, little man?

Marco: I ain't got nuthin' too.

Hutch: Uh-uh. Hey, what do you think, Razor?

Razor: I think I see cash in my future.

Hutch: Me too - come on, let's see them pockets out!

Marco: No!

Razor: Aww man... don't say no to Hutch! He gets, like, real angry when that happens, and you don't want him to get real angry. He gets, like, uncontrollable. Give him the money.

Hutch: So long, sucker. Heh heh heh...

Marco: Ugh! I'm *sick* of guys like that takin' our money. I'm gonna talk to my cousin Alex and see if he can get me in the Playboys.

Tony: Are you crazy, man? Those guys are trouble.

Marco: Yeah! Trouble! That's the point, Tony. They stick together so guys like Hutch and Razor and the rest of the Imperials won't rip 'em off. You know, they'd leave us alone if we were Playboys.

Tony: I know, but those Playboys, they're into drug running and all that stuff. Those guys are real gang bangers.

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Sgt. Ross: Hey Mike, how you doin? Hey Phil...

...Hey fellas. My name is Sergeant Ross; I'm with the Area 4 Youth Division down at the Police Department. You got a few minutes?

Marco: Well listen - we didn't do nuthin.'

Sgt. Ross: No, no - I'm not out to pinch anybody. I'm just going around telling young kids like yourself about a new program we got down at the Police Department. It's called Kid Phone Tips. See we know that the Imperials and Playboys have been putting a lot of heat on your kids lately so we set up a special phone line that you can call to let us know what's going down. You don't have to say your name, so no one will know you called. Basically the idea is, if we get good information, it'll help to keep a handle on the situation.

Marco: We're not interested. We're not ratting on nobody.

Sgt. Ross: Well, you never know what might happen. I tell you what, I'll just leave this here. Really - nobody will know.

Marco: That guy must be nuts.

Tony: Yeah... nuts.

Marco: He's living in a dream world. He thinks nobody would find out who snitched.

Tony: How would they find out?

Marco: They got spies at the Police Station. Everybody knows that.

Razor: Well look who's here - our little piggy banks. Oink oink.

Marco: Yeah, you think so? You see that guy over there? He's a cop.

Hutch: So what? You gonna squeal? You know what happens to people that squeal on Imperials?

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Part 3: Aleem

Aleem: I ain't never gettin' out of here. What's the use of me even trying? They think they're gonna help me? Huh. They've been sayin' they could turn me around ever since I can remember. Yeah right. He's smart. He *knows* what's goin' down.

T.R.: Just give it up, man. Just give it up. You'll always be a homeboy, so just make the most of it. You wanna be on the outside? When you can be on the inside? Hangin', bangin', and slangin'? When you could be clickin' it up?

Aleem: Yeah, I know T.R., man, but...

T.R.: But what? But what?? And don't give me that jive about the police, either. I can't believe you, man. I mean, look at them sorry clothes you got on. You wanna walk around lookin' like that the rest of your life? Huh? Now look at me. Look at me. You see what I mean? When you a Five-Tres Gangster and you be walking down the street, you *get* respect. You know what I say to you? Respect! When people see my colors, ain't nobody gonna mess with me. Because they know I'm not no mark. When you be flippin' burgers at McDonald's, you think you get that kind of respect?

Aleem: No.

T.R.: You know any woman dyin' to hang out with some ol' life flippin' burgers? I don't think so. And you know why?

Aleem: Why?

T.R.: Because you'll be makin' next to nothin'. Minimum wage. See my wheels out there?

Aleem: Yeah.

T.R.: You think you'd ever get that, working for minimum wage?

Aleem: No. I guess not.

T.R.: When I be drivin' through the hood, everybody know who I am.

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T.R.: That could be you, Aleem. You could be kickin' it, too.

Counselor: Have a seat, Aleem. I understand that you've been hanging around with T.R. Biggs.

Aleem; Yeah. He's my friend.

Counselor: Did you know he's been in a lot of trouble with the police? And that he gets young people to do drug deliveries for him?

Aleem: Oh, he never asked me to deliver no drugs for him.

Counselor: Well not yet. You know what can happen if you do, don't you?

Aleem: Do what?

Counselor: Do drug deliveries.

Aleem: Oh yeah, sure, I know.

Counselor: So you think it's such a good idea to hang out with T.R.?

Aleem: Like I said - he my friend. He gave me good advice.

Counselor: Oh yeah? Like what? Does he tell you how important school is?

Aleem: School? No. He know better than that. See, everybody said school was so important, but that's only for the smart kids. That's only for the kids that are going to graduate. Me, I'm at the bottom. Everybody, they just look down at me. You know, the only education I'm ever going to get is my PhD from S.W.U.

Counselor: What's that?

Aleem: Oh. My Playboy Hustlin' Degree from Sidewalk University.

Counselor: That's not what your records indicate. You've got a lot of potential, Aleem, but you're going to have to start making some choices.

Aleem: See, that's what I'm talkin' about. Everybody wanna say "oh, Aleem, you can do it, you got potential," but how come they put me in the bad room?

Counselor: You don't have to stay there. Your behavior determines that.

Aleem: No. They got me pegged. I ain't goin' nowhere. Nothin' ever changes.

Counselor: Well why not try? What have you got to lose?

Aleem: Another little piece of me. And I ain't got much of that left.

Counselor: You know, Aleem, I met somebody a couple of weeks ago that used to feel like that. He joined a gang, and then he saw that it wasn't everything he thought it was going to be. So now he spends his time talking to kids about it. I'm sure he'd be interested in talking to you, if you'd give him, say, half an hour of your time. Look, all you have to do is just listen. And I'm sure that he can show you that there are other choices and other ways than what you see right now. What do you say?

Aleem: Well...