



WINNING OUR WORLD

Bringing Hope to People in Need

NOVEMBER 2010

Dear Friend,

I am writing this to you as a father and a minister, not to present a problem without a solution, but to open your eyes to both the terrible plight of inner city children and the effect WOW is having on the inner city. I am praying that after you read this, you will open your heart and invest in our efforts to reach these little prisoners of violence. Of the over 50,000 people that attended our outreaches this year 25,000 were under the age of 12.

What happens to kids who learn to dodge bullets and step over dead corpses on the way to school? This question was asked by L.A. Times reporter, Lois Timnick, in an article entitled "Children of Violence". This article highlighted the images of horror and traumatic effects of inner city-generated violence experienced by children of South Central Los Angeles. South Central L.A. is one of the areas that WOW visits each year, where over 92% of the children will see a murder or violent crime before the age of 5. Timnick presents the poignant verbal accounts by these children:

** "They shoot somebody everyday," "I go in and get under the bed and come out after the shooting stops."*

** "My daddy got knifed when he got out of jail," and "My uncle got shot in a fight-there was a bucket of his blood. And I had two aunties killed and one of them was pushed off the freeway and there were maggots on her."*

** "It's like the violence is coming down a little closer." "We don't come outside a lot now."*

** "Just three people [in my family] died." "I been seein' two of them' (as haunting ghosts at night).*

** 'Her eyeball was in her shoe' (boy witnessed woman's mutilated body).*

Studies by the Lancet and Rand corporations indicates that children in South Los Angeles are exhibiting greater levels of post-traumatic stress disorder than children of a similar age in Baghdad, the war-torn capital of Iraq.

Recent surveys found that the United States surpassed other industrialized nations in violent crimes, including homicides. Every 34 minutes someone is murdered in the US with most of the murders in the inner city. We wonder why so many inner city children end up in prison, addicted to drugs, failing school. We find the answer in a research project done by Dr. Gardner stating that: "From an early age, children living in the inner cities are exposed frequently to the use of drugs, guns, arson, and random violence. They witness injury, suffering, and death, and they respond to these events with fear and grief, often experiencing dramatic ruptures in their development. The list of psychological reactions is long and grim: hatred for self, profound loss of trust in the community and the world, tattered internalized moral values and ethics of caring, and a breaking down of the inner and outer sense of security and of reality. They are particularly vulnerable to traumatic stress illnesses and to related behavioral and academic abnormalities".