

A Call to Reject the Federal Weed and Seed Program in Los Angeles

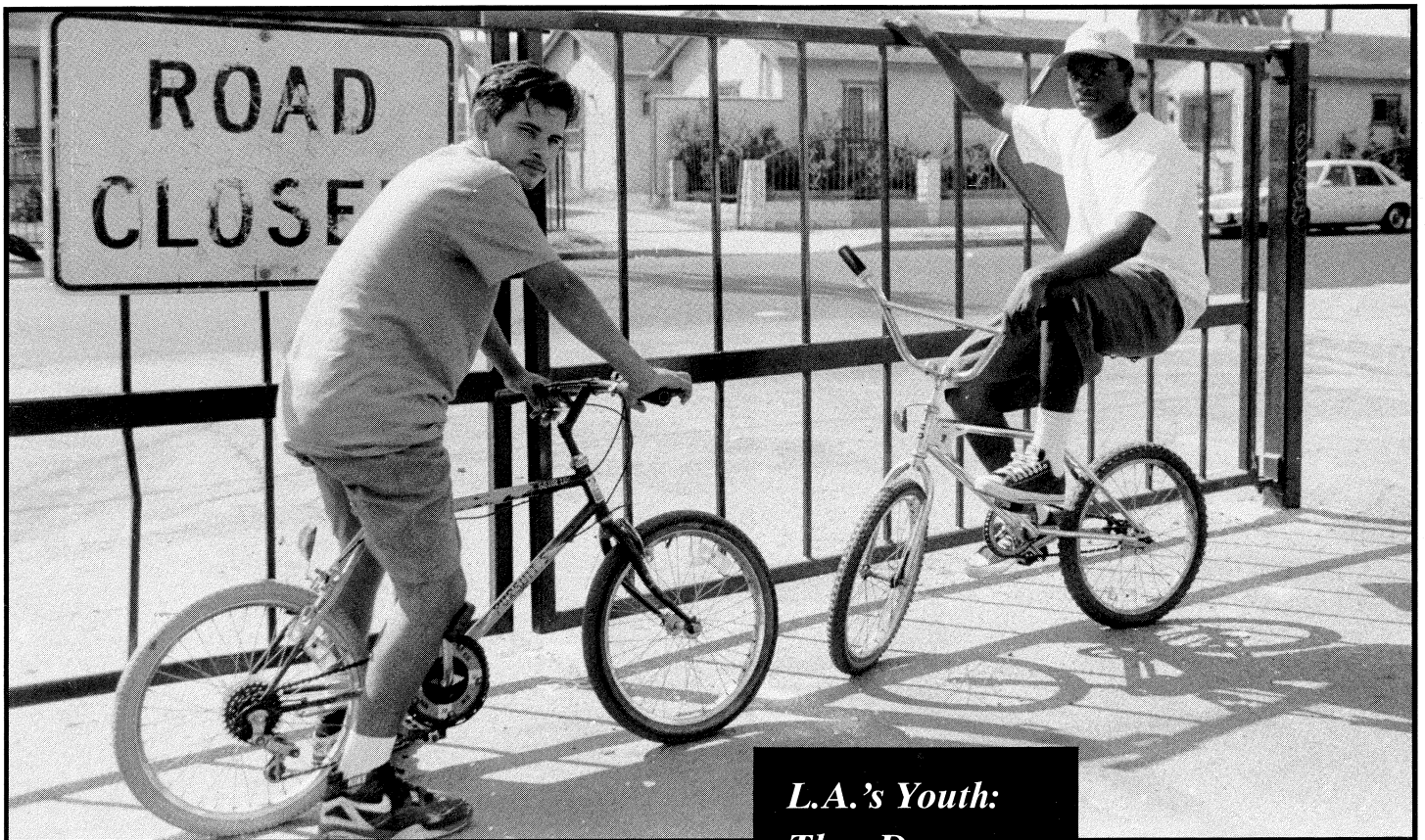


Photo: Patrick Ramsey

*L.A.'s Youth:
They Deserve
a Better Future
than Weed
and Seed*

The Urban Strategies Group

A Project of the Labor/Community Strategy Center

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“Weed and Seed works this way: First, we join federal, state and local forces to “weed out” the gang leaders, the violent criminals, and the drug dealers who plague our neighborhoods. When we break their deadly grip, we follow up with part two: we “seed” those neighborhoods with expanded educational opportunities and social services. But key to the seed concept will be jobs generating initiatives such as Enterprise Zones — to give people who call these neighborhoods home something to hope for.”¹

*President George Bush,
January 27, 1992*

“Weed and Seed works this way: First, it imposes a federal police presence in inner city, low-income neighborhoods that violates the civil rights and civil liberties of community residents. Then, it commandeers existing federal social service programs and places them under the authority of the Department of Justice, the FBI, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Then, it subordinates the economies of low-income target areas to the enterprise zone concept so that the labor and resources of the community serve the interests of business. In short, the federal Weed and Seed program is a move towards the imposition of a police state on the public life of low-income, communities of color.”

*The Urban Strategies Group
of the Labor/Community
Strategy Center,
September, 1992.*

C O N T E N T S

Overview	2
A Summary of the Weed and Seed Program	3
Political Context of Weed and Seed	4
Racist and Repressive Nature of Weed and Seed	6
Organizing a Response to Defeat the Weed and Seed Program	14
Demands	15

Overview

The Urban Strategies Group of the Labor/Community Strategy Center urges the Los Angeles City Council and Mayor Tom Bradley to withdraw their “in concept” support for the Federal Weed and Seed program. At present, the L.A. City Council has voted to designate two areas of Los Angeles — one in South Central and one in Pico Union/Koreatown — as pilot projects for the program.

Weed and Seed is a program organized, coordinated, and initiated in 1991 by the Department of Justice, that links together law enforcement, economic development, and social welfare programs in a supposed effort to “weed” out criminal elements as a precondition to “seeding” local programs with funding. Weed and Seed in reality would:

- ▶ Preempt the possibility of police reform in Los Angeles.
- ▶ Use federal laws and agencies to impose a “warfare” approach to urban problems.
- ▶ Violate the civil rights and civil liberties of low-income communities that are predominantly African American, Latino, and Asian American.
- ▶ Scapegoat rather than help a lost generation of urban youth.
- ▶ Impose a two-tiered justice system, with state laws applying to affluent, usually predominantly white communities, and federal laws applying to low-income communities of color.
- ▶ Create an unethical “linkage” between federal social-welfare programs and federal military programs, and thereby occupy and dominate the inner cities.

- ▶ Move U.S. society closer to a police state, especially with regard to urban “policy” targeting low-income, predominantly Black and Latino communities.

Low-income communities are well aware of how urgently they need expanded social programs and responsible police protection. Funding is needed for public-health, education, and income-supplementing programs, and for neighborhood and community-based social service agencies. Police protection from violent crime is needed, consistent with ethical police behavior and constitutional safeguards. However, the Weed and Seed program is, by its own definition, not just a *program*, but a *strategy* — a right wing strategy that subverts those legitimate community objectives. It exploits legitimate fear of crime in urban areas in order to position the Department of Justice as the central political force determining urban policy in the United States, with many social agencies subordinated to law-enforcement agencies. Its primary approach is not to solve complex urban problems of racism and poverty, but rather, to suppress the symptoms of urban neglect — drugs, crime, and violence — and in so doing, suppress the youth of the inner city. By “linking” funding for social programs with funding for police repression, it offers what amounts to community blackmail.

There is a need for a multi-racial, progressive, city-wide social movement in Los Angeles that demands increased social service funding and accountable police behavior. This report is an effort, not just to defeat the Weed and Seed program, but to play a role in helping to bring into existence that urgently needed social movement. We call on community, labor, civil rights, and civil liberties activists to join with us to persuade the Los Angeles City Council to reject the Weed and Seed program.

DEMANDS

1 We urge the L.A. City Council and its Ad-Hoc Committee on Recovery and Revitalization, chaired by Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas, to hold public hearings on the Weed and Seed program to allow the broadest public input into the process *before* any further votes are taken.

(Note: The L.A. City Council recently agreed to this action. Two public hearings are scheduled for October, 1992.)

2 We want public information about the Weed and Seed Task Force.

3 We demand that the L.A. City Council withdraw the City’s application to the Weed and Seed program, and withdraw its support for the program in general.

4 We urge that public officials and candidates for office oppose the Weed and Seed program.

5 We demand an increase in urgently needed federal social service funding for South Los Angeles, Pico Union/ Koreatown and other low-income communities. These funds must be in no way tied to the U.S. Department of Justice or any other federal, state or local law enforcement agency.

A Summary of the Weed and Seed Program

Operation Weed and Seed is a federal program launched in 1991 under the auspices of the Department of Justice. It attempts to integrate: 1) law enforcement, 2) social services, 3) jobs and economic opportunity, and 4) housing and community development under a federal law-enforcement banner.

According to U.S. Attorney General William P. Barr:

Operation Weed and Seed is a community-based, comprehensive, multi-agency approach to combatting violent crime, drug use, and gang activity in high-crime neighborhoods. The goal of this strategy is to “weed out” crime from targeted neighborhoods and then to “seed” the targeted sites with a wide range of crime and drug prevention programs and human service agency resources to prevent crime from reoccurring.²

In 1992, Weed and Seed has been offered to 16 urban centers, including Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Diego, Santa Ana, Seattle, and Washington D.C.³ Los Angeles was added to the list after the spring rebellions. It can only come into a city’s high crime neighborhoods at the invitation of the city administration. “Targeted neighborhoods” are defined by *“the presence of grass roots community organizations open to the Weed and Seed concept, high incidence of gang-related violence, high rates of homicide, aggravated assault, rape and other violent crime, high number of drug arrests, high dropout rate, high unemployment rate, and the presence of public-housing developments, including high-rise apartments.”*⁴

In 1991, the first year of operation, the Weed and Seed program focused on pilot projects in Trenton, New Jersey and Kansas City, Missouri. The actual working model is based largely on the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Violent Traffickers Project (VTP)—a joint federal-state task force organized in 1988 during the tenure of Police Commissioner Willie Williams, now Los Angeles Chief of Police. In Philadelphia and in each target city, Weed and Seed organizes a massive arsenal of law enforcement agencies—federal (Drug Enforcement Agency, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; the FBI, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the U.S.

Attorney’s Office), state (Pennsylvania Attorney General’s office, State Police), and local (Philadelphia police, District Attorney’s office).

The Philadelphia project boasts that 551 individuals have been arrested as a result of VTP investigations with a conviction rate of “over 99 percent,”⁵ an impressive, or chilling, figure depending on one’s perspective. Attorney General Barr points out that in Philadelphia, after the area had been “weeded,” the community engaged in all kinds of constructive activities, such as “renovating former crack houses, cleaning up playgrounds, and encouraging businesses to come into the area.”⁶ Note that none of these activities involved any federal funds, any improvement in people’s living standards, or any movement of funds from wealthy to low-income communities.

The Federal Alternative to State Trial (FAST) program, again initiated in Philadelphia, also serves as a model. In Attorney General Barr’s words:

Under the FAST project, selected drug and firearm cases are transferred to federal jurisdiction through the U.S. Attorney’s office. The transfer from local to federal jurisdiction substantially increases the likelihood that accused local drug dealers and other armed career criminals will remain in custody from the moment of arrest forward by holding them in federal detention facilities pending trial. In addition, defendants receive expedited trials in the federal district court. If convicted, they are subject to federal sentencing guidelines, and/or federal mandatory minimums, and incarcerated in a federal facility.⁷

Thus, by arbitrarily imposing federal statutes for already existing state and local criminal statutes, the overall impact of Weed and Seed will be to seriously diminish civil rights and liberties.

Moreover, Weed and Seed actually provides virtually no new federal funds, but instead appropriates existing federal funds and pulls them under the Weed and Seed authority, thereby expanding the influence of the Justice Department to supervise and essentially control already existing social service funding. As Attorney General Barr explains:

While additional funding will be allocated for this initiative, its success is not dependent upon new federal dollars. Rather, its success will depend, in large part, on coordinating private sector efforts and existing federal grants and State formula block grants and redirecting these resources. The Justice Department is working with officials from HUD, HHS, Labor, Education, Agriculture, Transportation, Treasury, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy to coordinate the manner in which

federal resources will be directed to this initiative in fiscal years 1992 and 1993, and I am pleased to say that they have been very enthusiastic about this critical effort.⁸

Thus, if Weed and Seed is implemented, the Department of Justice will be commandeering funds from every department, and placing education, labor, human services, housing, agriculture, and transportation policy under their authority (*See Weed and Seed budget, page 16*).

Additionally, Weed and Seed is intimately linked with “enterprise zones.”⁸ These are areas specially designated to receive tax breaks for industry in return for hiring low-income residents, usually at very low wages. This produces a concomitant weakening of the tax structure of cities and states, and a foundation of low-wage labor supported by a culture that places low-income communities at the mercy of business — all of this held together with a massive dose of armed force. Of the projected \$500 million in funding for fiscal 1993, \$400 million must be used in areas designated as enterprise zones.

In Section IV, we will go into a specific and detailed critique of the Weed and Seed program. But because the Department of Justice boasts that “Weed and Seed is a unique, innovative, and comprehensive *strategy* to combat violent crime,”⁹ it is first necessary to examine the broader strategy of the political Right in order to fully understand the dangers this “strategy” poses.

SECTION III.

The Political Context of Weed and Seed

During the period of urban rebellions in the 1960's, from Harlem to Detroit to Newark to Watts, one of the greatest gains of the civil rights movement was to popularize a widespread critique, not just among Blacks, but among substantial segments of the general population of all races—arguing that racial discrimination, urban poverty, and urban social unrest were caused by (and were therefore the responsibility of) the existing social system. Thus, led by organizations such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Black Panther Party, the civil rights movement argued that the government had to make anti-discrimination laws and social programs for Black and other minority poor—not police repression—the cornerstone of federal urban policy. Even at the height of the Great Society programs of

1964-1968 this was never fully realized, but at least during that period an overall progressive politics set the terms of the debate and expanded the influence of “the movement.”

By the time Ronald Reagan and George Bush came to office in 1980, an orchestrated “white backlash,” traceable back to the signing of the Civil Rights bill of 1964, had already significantly reduced federal support for civil rights and urban poverty programs. Although civil rights protections and social programs for the inner city had been eroded during the Nixon and Carter administrations, Reagan and Bush went far beyond mere erosion. They initiated a conscious counterrevolution — an explicit plan to undo virtually the entire combined social agenda of the New Deal and the Great Society. Their primary political objective was to consolidate a conservative, primarily white, and quite consciously racist electoral coalition so that they could reorganize U.S. society to further advance business interests in a period of greater international competition.

The Reagan/Bush strategy to increase the competitiveness of business was not based on expanding the innovative qualities of U.S. industry, but rather, on reducing the costs of labor and community life. Ronald Reagan, as a professionally trained actor, was the perfect spokesperson for his brilliant right wing strategists. Their plan was to transfer federal funds from social welfare programs to a federally supported military industry, from the working class and middle class to the wealthy, and from decent-paying, unionized labor to low-wage, unorganized, and atomized labor. To accomplish these objectives, the White House conducted a relentless propaganda assault on the victims of social and economic oppression in an attempt to delegitimize them in the eyes of the essentially suburban, middle class, and upper middle class voters who were the Right's primary electoral base of support.

When, after a century of being excluded from the best paying industrial jobs, African Americans and Latinos finally made inroads into well-paying, unionized jobs, Reagan attacked unionized workers in basic industry for “pricing themselves out of a job,” and implied that union labor was lazy, arrogant, and guilty of poor work quality, making “us” —meaning U.S. corporations— “uncompetitive with Japan.” Once in power, the Reagan administration advanced the interests of business by breaking the Air Traffic Controllers union (PATCO), stacking the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) with anti-union administrators, and ushering in the Era of the Working Poor.

The de-industrialization of Los Angeles, which began in the late 1970's and continued until the mid-1980's, led to the closing of the GM South Gate, Ford Pico-Rivera, Bethlehem Steel, Goodyear Tire, and Firestone Tire factories in the greater Los Angeles area—factories that had provided decent-paying jobs for tens of thousands of white, black, and Latino workers, *with many of the African American workers living in South Los Angeles*. As we will argue in further detail in our forthcoming report *Reconstructing Los Angeles from the Bottom Up*, this de-industrialization process was a major reason for the erosion of economic and social cohesion in Los Angeles' Black community and was a significant causative factor in the later urban rebellion.

With regard to dismantling the “safety net,” Reagan and Bush worked to explicitly racialize virtually every social issue, with a blatant appeal to white upper-middle-class, middle-class, and even working-class voters.

Thus Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) became caricatured as “fraud” perpetrated by “welfare queens” (with a clear, and false message that low-income Black and Latina women were bilking the government) even though the majority of women on welfare are white, even though most women stay on the program fewer than four years, and even though AFDC benefits allow for little more than stark subsistence.

Issues that clearly benefitted all working class people, such as public education, medical care, prenatal care, nutrition, and child care, were characterized as “welfare dependency” (with a not-very-subtle message that Blacks and Latinos, especially the immigrants who were slandered as “illegal aliens,” were the primary problem). White voters were told that people of color were living off government largesse, Latinos were told that African Americans did not have “family values,” and Asian Americans were told they were the “model minority,” isolating the low-income members of Asian American communities from the more affluent members and pitting Asian Americans most intensely against Blacks. And white working people, many of whom were watching their jobs get eliminated through capital flight, corporate mergers, and massive changes in capital investment (with no programs for income maintenance or job re-training) were told that affirmative action and social programs for the “undeserving poor” were at the root of their problems.

After thousands had gone to jail, endured beatings, and had risked and even given their lives for a civil rights movement that had pushed U.S. society to the threshold of civility, the political Right and the corporate interests they represented managed to push America back to its racist roots.

The Reagan strategy focused on two strong ideological arguments. First, poverty was said to be the fault of the poor. The Right developed (or capitalized on) clever formulations such as “welfare queens,” “undeserving poor,” “welfare dependency,” and “the culture of poverty” to successfully appeal to a predominantly white electorate. They promoted up-from-the-bootstraps images and exaggerated the potential for “community self-help” with an appeal to conservative, middle class elements in communities of color (many of whom, like Clarence Thomas, would deny their own sister welfare benefits). Second, communities of color were portrayed as crime-ridden, drug-infested, and gang-dominated; thus, the “criminalization” of the Black and Latino communities demanded wholesale “justice.”

Because of the struggles of many low-income and working class Blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans (as well as many of their white allies), affirmative action began to open up opportunities for a small but expanding Black and Latino middle and professional class. Again, because of the work of the civil rights movement, a long-overdue reduction in housing segregation allowed middle-class people of color to move away from the inner cities. Ironically, the vicious policies of social stratification initiated by the Reagan administration created a situation in which affluent middle-class Blacks and Latinos benefitted significantly from the same policies that were immiserating the Black and Latino poor. As a result, we began to see a small but significant segment of the Black and Latino middle class opposing social welfare programs to reduce or eradicate poverty, and instead, supporting greater “law and order programs.” Finally, as the social programs continued to disintegrate and the social cohesion in communities of color began to unravel, even some low-income people of color came to be convinced that increased police violence was the only antidote they had to violence and crime in their community.

The Right drew the lines of the “law and order” debate sharply. By stacking the Supreme Court—and many state courts as well—the Right has successfully increased federal and local authority to take away a suspect’s protection against illegal search and seizure; upheld the admission of illegally obtained, or even forced or coerced testimony and “confessions”; expanded the use of the death penalty and reduced appeal rights, and established “conviction rates”—even if evidence did not warrant convictions—as a measure of a program’s effectiveness.

The Reagan and Bush administrations advanced the right wing agenda in federal policy toward urban, low-income areas by dismantling much of what was left of

social programs for inner-city low-income people and establishing police policies that are explicitly geared toward the suppression of entire communities. It is this harshly reconfigured federal presence that Weed and Seed will increase in Los Angeles if it is not defeated.

One of the greatest crimes of right wing ideology as perfected under Ronald Reagan was that, as it tore down support for social welfare and promoted the return of the U.S. to unbridled free-market capitalism, it undermined the credibility of any theories that held society responsible for the problems of economically and socially oppressed groups. During the height of the social movements of the 1930's and 1960's, the political Left has argued that children would, in the main, grow up to be constructive and productive human beings if their parents were employed, if they were given educational and cultural support, and if they were offered some promise of a future. Accordingly, the Left argued that when "criminal activity" becomes more than random and isolated among any particular social or ethnic group — when members of a community begin to engage in violence against their peers, in drug use and drug sales, or in systematic robbery, mayhem and even murder — then the roots of those problems are to be found in the failures of the society.

This debate is not an abstract one. The economic downturn, the reduction in survival services, and the widespread community alienation brought about by the effective suppression of the hopes raised by the civil rights movement have led to growing social disintegration in communities of color, and to an increase in violent and criminal activity, usually against members of those communities. The recent weekend in late August, during which 28 homicides took place in Los Angeles, almost all in African American and Latino areas (with the majority of the victims residing in those communities), is a frightening and horrifying phenomenon.¹⁰ Community members have every reason to be alarmed, and to demand action.

Unfortunately, few community leaders are crying out about the Reagan-Bush era's dozen years of overt racism and economic and social neglect by federal, state, and local government — policies that are primary contributors to these complex social problems in the inner city. The Right has been masterful at discrediting the argument that the social problems of the poor are primarily caused by the ethics and rules of the *dominant classes*. And once communities lose a sense of who is responsible for the problem, we can be sure that choke holds, gang sweeps, LAPD and L.A. County Sheriff's Department beatings and killings of unarmed suspects, and federal armed force will be there to fill the vacuum.

It is sadly ironic that as the civil rights movement declined, its perceptive anti-colonial discourse also declined, for it is during the 1980's and 1990's that the conception of most U.S. inner cities as Third World enclaves dominated by a Washington-based empire has proven even more true. And in that context, Weed and Seed smacks of counterinsurgency. The program is based on the strategy developed by the U.S. military in the latter stages of the Vietnam war — a two-pronged plan to combine suppression of "enemy activity" through massive military force combined with "social programs" designed to "win the hearts and minds of the people." And, in designating many youth in communities of color as "weeds," the strategy duplicates the racist ideology of the Vietnam war that demonized and dehumanized Asian populations as "Viet Cong sympathizers," "terrorists," or "communists," in order to excuse or even to justify the atrocities of U.S. military policy against civilian populations. If Weed and Seed is broadly implemented, the "war" on drugs in "target areas" is likely to be accompanied by disastrously unrestrained police behavior.

The Weed and Seed program is reflective of a strategy that would impose a federal stranglehold over any last vestiges of democratic institutions and processes at the state and local level. Enterprise zones that suppress wage and environmental protections, federal efforts through the Quayle Council on Competitiveness to suppress state and local environmental laws, and federal preemption of local law enforcement are, ironically, to be enforced by the biggest of Big Governments, by a right wing movement that claims it wants to take government off people's backs.

This is the historical context in which Weed and Seed is operating. Now let's examine the dangers of this strategy in detail.

SECTION IV.

The Racist and Repressive Nature of Weed and Seed

1. *The Ideological War*

THE DEMONIZATION OF BLACK, LATINO, AND ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER YOUTH. To anchor any theory of society with the view that some young people in low-income communities, no matter how bad their individual behavior, are simply "weeds" to be rooted out and burned, avoids all the complex ethical and human questions that any parent of those children might have. Parents of youth

who are having problems with drugs or gangs, and who are engaging in anti-social behavior, ask themselves, “Why is my child acting this way?” “What can I do to change his or her behavior?” The question they face is “What is the correct relationship between moral transformation, education, and force in stopping behavior that is destructive to my son or daughter, our family, and the community?”

There are many parents in low-income communities who understand that in the case of extreme and dangerous behavior, police intervention and prison sentences are necessary. Nevertheless, it is an inhumane and unethical perspective that views youth who are gang members as “weeds” rather than as young people whose problems society must help solve, for their own sake as well as for others.

It must be remembered that drug use, crime, and violence are increasingly widespread in predominantly white, middle class communities as well. But in those communities, the policy of most parents is to clean up or cover up their children’s behavior and to have sentences commuted to probation and community service, with the hope that eventually the kids will “straighten out” and replicate their parents climb to upward mobility. The double standard — the use of lenient police and court policies for white, middle class and often suburban youth versus the intensification of the already brutal policies toward young people of color in the inner city — will be only intensified if Weed and Seed is implemented.

As Lisa Durán, a long-time activist in L.A.’s Latino community, observed:

The only role the system has for minority youth is as consumers, as a “market” for an endless barrage of products from stereos to clothes to running shoes to cars. The system offers these kids no education, no jobs, no community, and no hope. Then, when they react with frustration and begin to break society’s rules, the system finally offers them something concrete — police repression.¹¹

THE MYTH THAT VIRTUALLY ALL AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH ARE GANG MEMBERS. While racist stereotypes are used against all low-income communities of color, the group most scapegoated and falsely categorized is African American youth. L.A. District Attorney Ira Reiner, in a report that simultaneously asserted and hedged on its conclusions, explained that “some of the most troubling data to emerge from this study concern the extraordinary percentage of young Black males who show up in gang databases. The police have identified almost half of all Black men in Los Angeles County between the ages of 21 and 24 as gang members.”¹²

These blatantly false figures create a mandate for police brutality and abuse. The Weed and Seed program begins by targeting areas with, among other things, high incidence of “gang activity.” But in fact, the police simply equate being in a “database” *that they created* with being in a gang. The image orchestrated by the Right, that any kids coming out of a bowling alley, any kids talking back to a policeman, any kids involved in drug or violent activity are part of a gang conspiracy, undermines any serious discussion about the causes and cures of urban crime.

THE MYTH OF GANGS, DRUG SALES, AND VIOLENCE.

A central component of the gang image is that gang members are heavily involved in drug trafficking and that most of the violence results from that involvement. However, a report by Malcolm Klein, Cheryl Maxson and Lea Cunningham of USC, based on a thorough investigation of records from the LAPD and L.A. County Sheriff’s Department, drew conclusions that refuted many of these stereotypes. They found that: “street sales incidents would not show control of crack distribution by street gangs,” and that, “evidence would not demonstrate major changes in sales-related violence or in other variables attributable to street gang involvement in sales, either over time or as compared with non-gang crack sales.”¹³

Continuing studies by the same researchers have reinforced their earlier work. In an interview, co-author Cheryl Maxson explained the more recent findings, which distinguish between gangs, drugs, and violence: (a) Most gang violence is primarily related to gang issues, such as rivalries, and not to drugs; (b) Most drug-related violence is not gang-related.¹⁴ The new study concluded, “We find no evidence of spiralling effects of drug involvement in homicides between the mid and later years of the 1980’s. Again we conclude that concern for specific gang/drug/violence connections has been overstated, at least in [South Central] Los Angeles.”¹⁵

As might be expected, since the research findings did *not* confirm police assertions of an increased danger of gang violence due to drug activity, and thus, would not support increased hiring of police or increased use of police force, they were rejected by law enforcement agencies. “We reported our findings to management personnel in both departments [LAPD, L.A. County Sheriff], with mixed reception...The Sheriff’s Department accepted the findings, but regarded them as dated and unreflective of the drug/violence connections they perceived [in the late 1980’s]....The LAPD rejected our findings...”¹⁶

The research by Maxson and her colleagues was not attempting to downplay the seriousness of either the drug or the gang problems in South Central Los Angeles and other low-income communities. Rather, it was warning

that to base local police and federal law enforcement policy on the incorrect analysis that most drug sales and violence are a product of gangs opens up the door to “wholesale” arrests, often of innocent people, without any reduction in the threat of drugs and violence in the community.

2. *The “Criminalization” of Entire Black and Latino Communities*

Under the U.S. Constitution each person’s civil rights are buttressed by protections against police and government abuse, such as protection against illegal search and seizure, and self-incrimination. The political Right has worked to develop popular support to take away these constitutional protections of individuals, again on the theory that people of color (coded as “gang members,” “street thugs,” “urban criminal elements”) create such a *collective* “clear and present danger” to the public safety that constitutional protection of individuals must be overridden. Protecting “the rights of the victim” has often been the pretext for eradicating the constitutional rights of us all.

Not satisfied that a whole generation of Reagan judges have eroded most *individual* liberties, the Weed and Seed strategy operates on the idea of *wholesale extermination of group liberties*, substituting a law enforcement approach that will obviously lead to an enormous number of false arrests, to be followed by an even greater number of beatings, jailings, and charges against suspects for “resisting arrest.” The openly stated goal of imposing “tough Federal preventive detention statutes”¹⁷ indicates a plan to arrest “suspects” in anticipation of their committing a crime and holding them without bail throughout the trial period—an appealing concept given the very real threat of community violence, but a chilling one if the also promised “street sweeps” begin rounding up large numbers of innocent inner-city youth.

The process of criminalization of geographical communities can be seen in the placement of selected neighborhoods under federal control, and in the gang stereotyping of young people of color discussed above. If Weed and Seed is allowed to come to Los Angeles, it will be able to build upon the existing violations of civil rights that are already far too prevalent in the City.

3. *The Violation of the Rights of Immigrants*

By most accounts, approximately half the people participating in the uprising in Los Angeles were Latino, many of them Central American and Mexican immigrants.

An active role for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was part of City Hall’s request for federal assistance in quelling the uprising. Under the guise of the curfew, the LAPD took over some functions of the INS by stopping individuals on the street and questioning them regarding their immigration status—clearly violating the Department’s Special Order 40, a legal agreement prohibiting such activities. In 1979, the LAPD was sued because of its practice of picking up people who had committed no crime but were suspected of being undocumented immigrants, and delivering those people to the INS. Part of the lawsuit’s resolution included Special Order 40, which prohibited police officers from taking action against people solely on the basis of their immigration status, and states that the department will not involve the INS in a case unless that person has been charged with a felony, multiple misdemeanors or a high-grade misdemeanor.

During the week of the rebellions, many apprehended immigrants were quickly turned over to the INS for deportation. INS officers were seen riding in LAPD “black and whites” (police cars). According to a report by the Southern California American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), titled “Civil Liberties in Crisis: Los Angeles During the Emergency,”

...during and after the unrest, the Los Angeles Police Department stopped and interrogated many Latinos regarding their immigration status and turned them over to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. These turnovers often occurred without the lodging of criminal charges.¹⁸

The INS also confirmed that Border Patrol SWAT teams sent to Los Angeles as part of the 1,000 federal police officer deployment were also involved in making immigration arrests.¹⁹ Interestingly, the ACLU report points out that rather than the urban uprisings creating a real immigration problem, they instead provided a pretext for the LAPD, the LASD, and the INS to continue their violation of immigrant rights.

INS figures...establish that both LAPD and LASD continued to turn over higher numbers of undocumented people to INS two weeks after the emergency’s consensus conclusion....In all, between April 29 and May 20, the LASD turned over 1,090 people to the INS.²⁰

With regard to our concern that federal agencies systematically overstep their legal authority:

LAPD Deputy Chief Bernard Parks confirmed that Border Patrol agents, acting without police cooperation, swept through the MacArthur Park area and picked up about a dozen suspected undocumented persons during the civil unrest....The INS... reportedly conducted sweeps of the Pico-Union area, South Central, Mid-Wilshire, East Hollywood, Pacoima and Boyle Heights, clearly going beyond their role as translators.”²¹

And finally, in support of our argument that federal agents will arrest innocent people to give the impression of a strong “law and order presence”:

These violations were acknowledged by LAPD Lt. John Dunkin, who said in a May 6 *Los Angeles Times* story that “suspects turned over to the INS by the city police officers tended to be those for whom there was no ‘probable cause’ of prosecution for riot-related offenses.”²²

If Weed and Seed is accepted, the intimidating presence of the INS in the daily life of immigrants in Los Angeles will be expanded. The INS will be given even greater legitimacy and power over local police, and over the lives of immigrants in Los Angeles.

4. The Consequences of Federalized Law Enforcement

THE CREATION OF A RACIST, TWO-TIERED SYSTEM OF JUSTICE THROUGH THE FEDERALIZATION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT. Federal control of law enforcement brings with it harsher sentences and recognizes fewer civil rights. As the American Civil Liberties Union of the state of Washington, in opposing the Weed and Seed program for Seattle, explained, “Under federal law, an offender can be imprisoned for up to three times as long as a similar offender sentenced under Washington law.”²³

The U.S. Sentencing Commission has reported that 63% of the people incarcerated under federal mandatory sentencing laws were Black or Latino, and that one third of the total had no prior criminal record. It also reported that prosecutorial discretion in federal cases “appears to be related to the race of the defendant,” giving greater leniency to white defendants and imposing stricter penalties on defendants of color.

Federal laws, as supported by Supreme Court rulings, often recognize fewer civil liberties than state laws. For example, cities participating in federal crime prevention programs such as Weed and Seed have been allowed by judges to “tag” cars with surveillance devices even before a crime has been committed.²⁴

When local agencies are given the option of arbitrarily arresting suspects under either state or federal law there

is the probability of an increase in racial discrimination. The Washington ACLU argued, “Under ‘Weed and Seed’ Seattle’s white neighborhoods would be governed by state law and our black neighborhoods would suffer under harsher federal law.”²⁵

This is some of what we can expect from an increased federal role in local law enforcement.

THE FEDERALIZATION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT—THE POLICE STATE WILL ONLY START IN SOUTH CENTRAL, WHERE IT STOPS, NOBODY KNOWS. The tendency of law enforcement agents is to operate outside the law, which includes outside their mandate, and outside their territory. A federal armed force in Los Angeles would ostensibly be there to only “weed” in pre-designated target zones, such as South Central and Pico Union/Koreatown. But for those, from Pacoima to Beverly Hills, who may be saying, “Whew! Weed and Seed doesn’t concern me” remember that an increase in FBI agents, surveillance teams, electronic eavesdropping and wiretapping will quickly spill over to surveillance of political “subversives” as defined by the political Right and military and police intelligence. Whether you are a community activist or a progressive member of the entertainment industry, a demonstrator in front of the Westwood federal building or a “suspect” for a drug investigation that begins in South Central but spills over into East Los Angeles or Pacoima, you may well be a target for the growing federal police presence. And since most of their work will be “under cover,” can anyone be sure who will be included and who will be spared?

We have already experienced the Public Disorder Intelligence Division, the Anti-Terrorist Division and other political espionage abominations of the LAPD. Do we want to expand that danger by allowing federal forces to come in as well?

5. The Pre-emption of the Police-Reform Movement in Los Angeles

During 1991 and 1992 there have been two major investigations of police misconduct in Los Angeles — the Christopher Commission’s investigation of the LAPD and Kolts Commission’s investigation of the L.A. County Sheriff’s Department. Both investigations uncovered widespread cases of improper police behavior, violations of civil rights, racist attitudes and practices, as well as secrecy and unaccountability. These discoveries parallel those of Amnesty International, whose own study explained that the police beating of Rodney King was part of a “larger pattern of abuse” in Los Angeles law enforcement.²⁶

Despite the euphoria over the appointment of LAPD Chief Willie Williams, the structural problems of police brutality, misconduct, and racism are far too great for one person to solve. It will take a sustained community-based movement to reform police behavior from the bottom up and shift institutional power toward communities assuming full oversight. Open public debate and participation is a critical requirement for true police reform. At the very least, a comprehensive reform package would have to include:

- ▶ Community-based police review boards with independent investigative authority.
- ▶ The right of communities to establish localized community-initiated policing methods. In each community, the tactics and approach may differ, but it is at the community level where cultural differences, local initiative, and accountability can interact to provide the best solutions.²⁷
- ▶ Public access and scrutiny of police officer personnel records, with relation to repeated cases of improper behavior, as well as records of citizens' complaints.
- ▶ Public access and scrutiny of police internal affairs sanctions against officers due to substantiated citizens' complaints.
- ▶ The establishment of a Civil Rights Litigation Unit in the County D.A.'s office that specializes in police misconduct investigation and prosecution. This proposal has been put forth by board members of the ACLU and Southern Christian Leadership Conference in light of the findings of the Kolts and Christopher Commissions and the failed efforts to prosecute police after the beating of Rodney King and the killing of the Samoan Tualalelei brothers in Compton.
- ▶ Public access to all records in which an individual required medical attention while in police custody.

If the federal government becomes involved in Los Angeles law enforcement, the options for police reform in L.A. become "slim" or "none." In looking at the line-up of participants in Weed and Seed, imagine the LAPD working in conjunction with the FBI, the INS, the Federal Drug Enforcement Agency, and the Office of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms. In that scenario, who can be held accountable?

Weed and Seed boasts as one of its selling points that they are able to arrest first, then go to a menu of state and federal laws to see which one fits best.²⁸ This will create a nightmare for civil rights and liberties, and it will allow the LAPD and Sheriff's Department to hide behind federal statutes and federal agents.

We understand that there are enormous, and seemingly overwhelming problems of crime in low-income communities, including the daily possibility of physical violence and even death. Each community must be able to determine the proper application of essential police force and have oversight and control of police behavior. If Weed and Seed is implemented in Los Angeles, the only opportunity for community involvement will be in cooperating with the federal, state and local police in a way that provides "community-based" cover for their abuses.

On the other hand, if L.A. refuses to participate in the Weed and Seed program, the debate about police use of force and police apprehension of suspected criminals can take place at the community, citywide, and countywide level — the appropriate arena for such a debate. Even those who want more police on the beat and stricter enforcement of specific criminal laws have to recognize that once there is a widespread federal presence in Los Angeles, any community voice about police policy will be reduced to an irrelevant whisper.

6. The War on Drugs — An Armed Forces Approach to an Essentially, Public Health and Medical Problem

The root of the drug crisis is the medical problem of drug addiction. Although the criminal apparatus of the drug trade, and the violence that accompanies it demand law enforcement measures, relying primarily on policing to solve the drug crisis is a hopelessly deluded approach. The complex discussion of how to address widespread drug addiction in our society must focus on medical, therapeutic, and community-based approaches, and on a real effort to stop drug sales at the top.

But the political Right, which has no interest in or capacity for solving social problems, prefers to hide behind the mythical image of the once-and-for-all "crack-down" on drugs. This would be a funny concept if it were not so tragic, since the "crack-down" would have to extend to every corporate board room in the U.S., to every college dormitory, to many private homes (including those in the wealthiest neighborhoods), to the entire record and entertainment industry, to every Century City law office, to the U.S. Senate and House office buildings, and yes, to the White House.

But by its definition, Weed and Seed only applies to low-income — and in most cases, primarily African American, Latino, and Asian American — communities. Weed and Seed calls for special task forces composed of federal agencies such as the FBI, the DEA, the Justice Department, the U.S. Attorney, and local law enforcement offices including the LAPD, the L.A. County Sheriff's

Department, and local district attorneys. These task forces would be under federal control, and would utilize federal laws to subject suspects to “pretrial detention,” “speedy trials,” and “mandatory minimum sentences.”

In terms of police behavior in the community, the “Weed” game plan as defined by the Department of Justice is based on an occupying mentality, if possible with the sanction of community leaders. Their announced tactics would include “street sweeps,” “use of sophisticated audio-visual evidence-gathering techniques,” “intensified narcotics investigation,” and “targeted prosecutions.”

As Mike Davis, author of the prescient book about L.A. *City of Quartz* observed:

In practical terms, this strategy is not so much a matter of a romanticized policy of deep cover infiltration of the gangs, as simply a ruthless escalation of police pressure on pathetic drug users who are friends or kin of gang members.

One of the most cost-effective tactics for mass produced snitches is the so-called “reverse buy” where police act as drug dealers in order to entrap customers, who are then offered the choice of serving hard time or becoming informants. Indeed, the “reverse buy” is a cornerstone of the attorney general’s “Weed and Seed” program. It is also, of course, morally obnoxious and indicative of a full-blown police state.²⁹

7. *The Combination of Weed and Seed with Enterprise Zones: Police and Corporate Domination of the Inner City*

The so-called “Seed,” the \$19 million promised for social services in the inner city, is tied to the creation and expansion of enterprise zones.

Enterprise zones provide tax incentives to corporations to locate in designated “poverty areas,” as well as the promise of relaxed environmental regulations and low-wage labor. In exchange, the community is promised jobs. These zones have not worked very well when put into practice:

- ▶ A 1992 Los Angeles City Administrative Office (CAO) management audit of the Industrial & Commercial Development Division (where the enterprise-zone program is administered) of the City’s Community Development Department stated that “other performance indicators suggest that the program is not achieving the desired results.”³⁰
- ▶ According to the L.A. Times, from 1987 to 1990 city officials claimed that the program created less than 1,000 jobs in Los Angeles’ five enterprise zones—including 159 in Watts, 220 in Central City, 212 in Pacoima, and 157 in Eastside.³¹ In the San Pedro-

Wilmington zone during the same time period, only 89 new jobs have been created although last year \$737 million in building permits were issued!³² When Jasper Williams, one of the city’s enterprise zone managers, claimed that in 1989 415 jobs were created in the Central City zone, he also added that “quite honestly, because of the location, a lot of this [business activity] would have happened anyway.”³³

- ▶ State enterprise-zone law encourages “streamlining permit processes,” i.e. using the promise of increased jobs to create substandard environmental conditions, overriding local community plans and zoning regulations, and relaxing building and safety codes in the communities that are already subject to the worst public health threats from industrial and auto-based emissions.
- ▶ Given that existing tax breaks have not worked, the city, state and federal governments will need to substantially increase tax incentives to lure companies to relocate. If this policy is pursued it will cause another reduction in the overall tax base of society as schools, hospitals, and health-care centers are cut back or closed. Remember that each “tax break” to business is one part of the complicated answer to the question, “Where is all the money going for vital services?”
- ▶ Most important, enterprise zones stand in the way of a feasible strategy to develop a high wage policy in the inner city.

Enterprise zones create an industrial policy that begs companies to relocate, often from other socially and economically depressed areas. *Instead of begging companies to come, good social policy would demand that companies hire people from the community, offer good wages and benefits, and adhere to sound environmental policies.*

8. *The Cutting of Federal Social Welfare Programs in Order to “Link” Social Welfare to an Explicit Police Program*

It is a galling case of hypocrisy for the Bush administration to promise \$18 million in Weed and Seed social service funding, at the same time that the federal government is cutting funds from federal job training, health care, education, and housing programs. The slashing of budgets for desperately needed social programs, combined with the offer to restore a small portion under conditions of linkage to increased federal police is political blackmail.

This plan to appropriate existing funds from the federal departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Transportation, Housing, Welfare, and Agriculture, and impose a federal police force component on each of them is one of the most sinister elements of Weed and Seed. If Weed and Seed has its way, future federal agencies might be named, "The Department of the Army and Civil Rights," "The FBI/AIDS Research Department," "The INS Food Stamps Program," and the "Department of Marines and Marine Biology." Each agency will have the same slogan: "If you want our services, please deposit your civil rights and civil liberties at the door."

The need to maintain the independence of social welfare programs from police interference is well-illustrated by the history of how social programs were won. The movements to develop and expand social welfare were initiated during the 1930's by a left-oriented labor movement, and during the 1960's by a left-oriented civil rights movement. In both cases those movements and their members were heavily repressed by troops, both federal and local, and police, and owed much of their vitality to the struggle *against* police violence and abuse. To now have the federal government, that has worked so hard to destroy those programs, use increased police force as a bribe is unacceptable, and must be firmly rejected by community leaders.

City officials who have attempted to use Weed and Seed to procure additional funding for social programs while downplaying or evading its law enforcement agenda have failed in their efforts. For example, in Seattle, Washington, Mayor Norm Rice initially accepted the Weed and Seed program over strenuous objections from community groups; he claimed he was aware of some of the onerous aspects of the program, and reassured communities that he would emphasize fighting poverty, not "fighting crime." The Department of Justice responded by rejecting the applications of 8 out of the 10 proposed projects on the grounds that the project plans were soft on crime. Now, there is an uproar in Seattle, with local newspapers urging the Mayor to get out of the program altogether.

With these lessons from the theory and practice of Weed and Seed, Los Angeles must take nationwide leadership in rejecting, and then defeating, Operation Weed and Seed.

9. The Weed and Seed Strategy to Intimidate, Compromise and Co-opt Community Leadership

Many community organizations and social service agencies have been formed out of a deep concern for the human beings and the social problems in low-income communities. Many of the staff of these organizations and agencies have dedicated their lives to

their communities. Operation Weed and Seed presents an ethical and practical challenge to such agencies and organizations. It begins by creating an unethical and politically-destructive "linkage" between federal law enforcement programs and the funding of social service programs. Furthermore, it does so by creating an illusion of increased federal social funding.

Cleverly, the Bush administration and the office of the Attorney General, have funneled funds already earmarked for communities into the Weed and Seed program, thus, continuing the illusion that they are providing social service funding. Of the first \$19 million promised to Los Angeles for 1992, for example, only \$1 million is initially for law enforcement programs ("Weed") and \$18 million for community services ("Seed"). This gives the impression that the "law enforcement" aspect of the program will be relatively minor, with the "social services" component the overwhelming focus of the plan.

In reality, the \$18 million was already part of the budgets of the U.S. departments of Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Department of Education, and Department of Labor.³⁴ Why aren't those federal departments funded at a much higher level? Why is the social-service component of federal tax revenues a far lower priority than military spending? How can we get additional revenues into federally funded agencies in Los Angeles? And, how can we get the Department of Justice out of the social welfare business?

Remember, this is only the first year that the Weed and Seed program has functioned at full-scale, and already it controls \$500 million in federal funds. If not defeated in its early stages, within a few years the Justice Department will control virtually the entire social welfare budget of the federal government.

Some community activists have been trying to circumvent the program rather than frontally attacking it, trying to figure out how to get the "Seed" without the "Weed." Experience indicates that it can't be done. For example, in the Seattle, Washington application to Weed and Seed, city officials tried to downplay the repressive aspects of the program in order to get urgently needed funds for social programs. But, as Pamela Swain, Acting Deputy at the Bureau of Justice Assistance, wrote in a rejection letter regarding "questionable costs": "The following expenses appear to be unallowable unless *the Seattle Police Department has a significant involvement in program activities* [our italics]:

- ▶ foreign language translation service
- ▶ community mobilization
- ▶ Seattle Team for Youth"³⁵

The specter of a police department having a significant role in the program activities of local agencies attempting to provide translation services, mobilize the community, and work with youth should in itself convince social service providers of the complete unacceptability of the Weed and Seed strategy. We urge community activists and staff of social agencies to join with us in demanding extensive public hearings to examine the full implications of the Weed and Seed program. After a full and fair debate, we urge you to join with us in asking the L.A. City Council to withdraw the application to the Weed and Seed program.

10. *The Weed and Seed Program—Is This A Step in the Direction of an American Fascism?*

We have spent several weeks debating among ourselves as to whether we should make an explicit argument about the danger of fascism. Would people feel that we are overstating the case? After weeks of deliberation and careful discussion among the members of the Urban Strategies Group, we want to argue that the Weed and Seed program has to be understood as a dangerous step in the direction of a made-in-the-U.S.A. fascism. For while fascism is too strong a word to describe the present state of Weed and Seed, it is not too strong to describe its danger, its intent, and its trajectory.

We have identified several interrelated phenomena as pointing the way to fascism.

- ▶ A social context of economic and social decay in which widespread despair, alienation, and degenerate behavior becomes commonplace, beginning at the highest circles of society.
- ▶ Despair about the possibility of progressive social change and the prospects for democracy. A justified distrust of government institutions and political institutions (such as the two-party system), is mixed with pessimism over the possibility of changing them, and a retreat into privatism.
- ▶ Racial scapegoating of a minority (or, as in the case of South Africa, a majority of the population by a self-designated master race) that believes that the economic and social privileges of the preferred racial group are due to inherent racial superiorities and that the suffering and social problems of the “inferior races” are due to inherent genetic and cultural flaws.
- ▶ Strong support for state violence against specific groups who are not considered part of the dominant society — the designation of some human beings as “other.” In Nazi Germany the victims were the Jews, in South Africa, Blacks. In the United States, this takes a

somewhat more veiled form because of the strong resistance by some African American, Latino, Asian American, and Native American activists and organizations, and because of the Right’s need to co-opt elites in communities of color. Thus, attacks are made in a coded racial language, on “the undeserving poor,” the “underclass,” “gangs,” “drug pushers,” and “thugs.” If you think we are exaggerating, ask any group of suburban or urban white people whom they envision racially when they come home to find their home vandalized, and have no clue as to the perpetrators, and yet tell their neighbors “*They* broke in last night.” Or ask them whom they envision racially when the words “gangs,” “drug pushers,” or “thugs” are used.

- ▶ An explicit move by the business classes to take over government, because, they claim that government is run by bureaucrats and “special interests” and only business can govern in the interest of the majority. The Ross Perot candidacy, and the Peter Ueberroth strategy to “Rebuild Los Angeles” (which we will analyze in our forthcoming report *Reconstructing Los Angeles from the Bottom Up*), are examples of this phenomenon.
- ▶ The use of the police force and the army as the organizing instrument of society. Weed and Seed openly argues that the Department of Justice, the FBI, the INS, and federal firearms, narcotics, and alcoholic beverage agencies will now be the central organizing force in all federal programs coming into urban centers. Those who attempt to minimize the repressive aspects of Weed and Seed, by arguing, for example, that in the Los Angeles plan, only \$1 million goes for “Weed” while \$18 million goes for “Seed,” totally miss the danger of what is being proposed. Under this strategy, all federal programs will be controlled by the Department of Justice, and the \$18 million that used to be in relatively independent social programs, now comes under the aegis of a law enforcement agenda. At the federal level, a mere \$20 million investment by the Department of Justice allows it leverage over another \$480 million in social program funds.
- ▶ If this trend is not reversed, there will eventually be one major agency administering funds to urban areas, the Department of Justice, and under it will be agencies dealing with health, education, welfare, agriculture, housing, and labor. Again, this is not an effort to project very far into the future, this is an explicit part of Weed and Seed’s strategy in the *present*.

Organizing a Response to Defeat the Weed and Seed Program

The organizing plan of the Urban Strategies Group with regard to Weed and Seed is three-fold:

- 1 To win a series of public hearings, sponsored by the L.A. City Council Ad-Hoc Committee on Recovery and Revitalization, and chaired by Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas, to fully evaluate the Weed and Seed program.
- 2 To get specific community agencies and organizations to withdraw their applications to the Weed and Seed program and to join a movement to defeat the entire program in Los Angeles.
- 3 To get the L.A. City Council to withdraw from any participation in the Weed and Seed program.

In Seattle, Washington, the Garfield High School Site Council, a school voting board made up of faculty, parents, students and community members, recently told Seattle Mayor Norm Rice that they would not accept \$30,000 in Weed and Seed money for the new Garfield Teen Clinic. Joan Stewart, a parent on the council, said that the Weed and Seed program would hamper their program's effectiveness because "the kids we want to serve may feel fearful of using the program."³⁷ The clinic has a relatively small budget of \$125,000, and the additional \$30,000 would have been a significant addition of funding, but also an even greater subtraction of community credibility. This is an example of what people with courage and principles are willing to do. Los Angeles community activists cannot afford to do less.

There is no question that the African American community, the Latino community, the Asian American community, and other communities of color suffer from an urgent need for resources to address the growing social crisis in urban life. These communities have suffered from the unrelenting assault by the political Right over the past 12 years which has rolled back and reversed the few gains of the civil rights movements of the 1960's and 1970's, and reestablished racist stereotyping as national policy. When combined with the decline of mass social movements that provide a sense of power and hope for social change, these factors have caused even some of the most progressive community leaders and organizations to compromise their

An ominous aspect of the expansion of these repressive trends is that they have been achieved with a measure of popular support and acquiescence, rather than being entirely imposed from above. Successful racist electoral campaigns have supported the imposing of government policies that systematically take away the civil rights or liberties of racial and ethnic minorities, take away the language rights of immigrants, and take away the food from the mouths of low-income children. Weed and Seed openly promises to escalate that trend.

As Anthony Thigpenn, a long-time activist against police abuse in L.A.'s African American community, points out:

As social services decline, and social unrest in Black and Latino communities escalates, there will be no walls between gangs, civil rights protestors, and political radicals and revolutionaries. All forms of protest outside the system, inside the system, and explicitly against the system will take a more militant and defiant form as the remedies of the existing system become increasingly bankrupt.

As during the 1960's, just as there was no clear line between unemployed youth, angry youth, and politically involved youth, the police made little distinction in their repression of defiant youth, "criminal youth," militant non-violent civil rights groups, and revolutionary organizations such as the Black Panther Party. That is, police repression was systematically directed at any forms of protest or non-compliance.

The federal Weed and Seed program will give a green light to a growing apparatus of police terror in communities of color, an apparatus that will be increasingly used against the new social movements of protest and resistance that have not yet come into being, but that we can hope and expect to exist in the not-too-distant future.³⁶

We do not ask people to agree on what is the specific and absolutely correct formulation to describe this growing and frightening phenomenon. But whether you choose to call it "a move in the direction of fascism," "neofascism," "a frightening trajectory towards a police state for people of color," or simply "the erosion of our civil rights and liberties", we are asking you to consider seriously that Weed and Seed is a strategy to dramatically expand the role of the military over civil society—a strategy that should terrify us and prompt the most resolute and decisive counter-organizing. We hope that after you have read this document, you will want to play an active role in defeating operation Weed and Seed.

beliefs and strategies in order to “adjust” to the harsh new Social Darwinist political realities of our times.

However, there is a clear line beyond which progressive leaders and organizations cannot go and still be considered (or consider themselves) progressive. Relinquishing either a community’s or segments of a community’s civil rights and liberties is such a line. To embrace or legitimize Weed and Seed (or even to remain silent in the face of government funding or its promise) on a pragmatic argument of accumulation of resources for “the community” is at best naive and at worst self-aggrandizing. In either case the result will be the same—jeopardizing the civil rights and civil liberties of the most vulnerable communities.

At this point in history, there is a need for a revitalized, progressive, multi-racial movement rooted in communities of color to preserve and expand those community’s ethical, organizational, and human resources. The fight against Weed and Seed is more than a tactic, as Weed and Seed proclaims, it is part of a broader strategy. Their strategy is inner city domination; ours is a new, multi-racial, revitalized progressive movement in Los Angeles that can place the rights and needs of communities of color and low-income people at the forefront of social policy, and one that can mount an effective opposition to increased police repression. We urge you to play an active role in that evolving movement, and in our plan to defeat Weed and Seed.

SECTION V.

Demands

Based on the analysis put forth in this report, we urge the following actions:

1 We urge the L.A. City Council and its Ad-Hoc Committee on Recovery and Revitalization, chaired by Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas, to hold public hearings on the Weed and Seed program to allow the broadest public input into the process before any further votes are taken.

(Note: The L.A. City Council recently agreed to this action. Two public hearings are scheduled for October, 1992.)

2 We want public information about the Weed and Seed Task Force.

- ▶ Who are the participants in the weekly Weed and Seed Task Force meetings?
- ▶ Who chairs and runs these meetings?
- ▶ What is the “Weed” program for Los Angeles?
- ▶ What threats, promises, or other offers have been made already to the existing social service agencies the task force has categorized as “Seed?”
- ▶ What commitments were made by the Bradley administration prior to a City Council vote?

3 We urge that the L.A. City council to withdraw the City’s application to the Weed and Seed program, and withdraw its support for the program in general.

- ▶ Mayor Tom Bradley and the L.A. City Council must reconsider their support for the Weed and Seed program and withdraw Los Angeles’ application to the program.
- ▶ The City Council must direct the mayor to dismantle the Weed and Seed “work groups” that are presently functioning in anticipation of the program being adopted.

4 We ask that public officials and candidates for office oppose the Weed and Seed program.

- ▶ Members of Congress and the U.S. Senate (and candidates for those positions) must call for the dismantling of the federal Weed and Seed program.
- ▶ Presidential and vice presidential candidates Bill Clinton and Albert Gore must take a public stand in opposition to the Weed and Seed program.

5 We demand an increase in urgently needed federal social service funding for South Los Angeles, Pico Union/Koreatown and other low-income communities such as East Los Angeles, Pacoima, Wilmington, and Chinatown, funds that are in no way tied to the U.S. Department of Justice or any other federal, state or local law enforcement agencies.

PROGRAMS CONTRIBUTING TO WEED AND SEED ³⁸

(Obligations in millions of dollars)

PROGRAM	1993 OBLIGATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE:	
US Attorneys	20
Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Demonstrations	10
Subtotal Justice	30
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR:	
Job Training Partnership Act	28
Youth Opportunities Unlimited	5
Senior Community Service Employment	9
Job Corps	50
Subtotal Labor	92
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES:	
Treatment Improvement Grants	36
Capacity Expansion Grants	47
High Risk Youth/Pregnant Women Prevention	7
Community Partnership Grants	4
Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) JOBS	43
Head Start	54
Community Health Centers	35
Subtotal HHS	226
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT:	
Public Housing Modernization	20
Housing Vouchers	20
Community Development Block Grants	44
Public Housing Drug Elimination Grants	6
Subtotal HUD	90
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION:	
Compensory Education	16
School Improvement/Pre-College Outreach	30
Family Literacy and Adult Education	10
Subtotal Education	56
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION: Reverse Commute Demonstration Grants	1
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE: Women, Infants, Children (WIC) Nutrition	5
Total for 1993	500

ENDNOTES

- 1 George Bush, cover quote, Department of Justice, Operation "Weed and Seed" Fiscal Year 1993 Program Description.
- 2 William P. Barr, Attorney General, "The Weed and Seed Initiative," Civil Remedies in Drug Enforcement Report, National Association of Attorneys General, June/July 1992, p.4.
- 3 Kansas City, Missouri, and Trenton, New Jersey were pilot sites in 1991; the cities eligible in 1992 were: Atlanta, GA; Chelsea, MA; Charleston, SC; Chicago, IL; Denver, CO; Fort Worth, TX; Santa Ana, CA; Madison, WI; Philadelphia, PA; Pittsburgh, PA; Richmond, VA; San Antonio, TX; San Diego, CA; Seattle, WA; Washington, DC; and Wilmington, DE. William P. Barr, op cit.
- 4 Department of Justice, Operation "Weed and Seed," Report to Congress, First Quarter, January 1992, p. 8. Italics ours.
- 5 William P. Barr, op. cit., p. 5.
- 6 Department of Justice, op. cit., p. 3.
- 7 William P. Barr, op. cit., p. 5.
- 8 *ibid.*, p.7. [emphasis added.]
- 9 Department of Justice, op. cit., p. 1.
- 10 Jesse Katz, "Numbed L.A. Takes Grim Note of 28 Slain in Weekend," *Los Angeles Times*, August 25, 1992, p. 1.
- 11 Lisa Durán is a member of the Mexican American Political Association and the coordinator of volunteer and educational programs for the Labor/Community Strategy Center.
- 12 L.A. District Attorney Ira Reiner, "Gangs, Crime, and Violence in Los Angeles: Overview of Conclusions and Recommendations," p. iv.
- 13 Klein, Maxson, and Cunningham, "Crack, Street Gangs, and Violence," *Criminology*, Volume 29, Number 4, 1991, p. 626.
- 14 Professor Cheryl Maxson, conversation with Eric Mann, August 21, 1992.
- 15 Maxson, Cheryl L., Malcolm W. Klein, and Lea Cunningham. July 1992. "Definitional Variations Affecting Drug and Gang Homicide Issues." Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Crime and Social Control, University of Southern California. p. 32.
- 16 *ibid.*, p. 5.
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- 31 "L.A.'s Zone Program Is Unproven," by John Schwada, *Los Angeles Times*, A38, June 14, 1992.
- 32 Keith Comrie, op.cit., p. 38.
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- 36 Anthony Thigpenn, formerly the director of Los Angeles Jobs with Peace, is presently a member of the Urban Strategies Group of the Labor/Community Strategy Center.
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