

VIOLENCE



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SIG PURWIN

CENTER FOR HEALTH COMMUNICATION



Harvard School of Public Health

Jay A. Winsten, Ph.D., Director

To: Interested Persons
From: Jay Winsten
Date: December 12, 1994
Re: Update on "Squash It!"



Jose -
I saw this
guy at Renaissance.
He probably could
have used a
Squash It Campaign
when he
was
growing up
- BR

I am writing to provide a brief update on the "Squash It!" Campaign to Prevent Youth Violence. "Squash It!" is a phrase used by inner-city youths in Los Angeles, New York City, Chicago, Miami, Boston, and other urban centers to signal decisions to disengage from confrontations. The Campaign's goal is to use this phrase and an accompanying hand gesture to promote a social norm that says it's cool and smart to walk away from potentially violent confrontations. The hand gesture—a stylized "T" based on the timeout signal in sports—is formed by bringing the palm of a flat hand down onto a vertical clenched fist.

Here is a brief update on recent developments in the Campaign:

1. Fox Broadcasting's "South Central" became the first network series to incorporate the "Squash It!" message (both the phrase and the hand gesture) in a special one-hour episode called "Gun," which aired on May 24. The producers also tagged the episode with a PSA featuring series star Larenz Tate. Attached is Fox Broadcasting's press release announcing the network's involvement in "Squash It!" Several additional prime time episodes incorporating the "Squash It!" message are currently in development, and several network series will feature the Campaign's "Squash It!" poster on a regular basis. Attached is a miniature of the 16" x 20" poster (available on request).
2. Coach Nolan Richardson of the Arkansas Razorbacks was featured in the first public service announcement produced by the Campaign. Videotaped on the Fayetteville, Arkansas campus of the 1994 NCAA basketball champions, the PSA was distributed by satellite to all local television stations on July 15 by the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB). The PSA contains an animated "Squash It!" logo created for the campaign by ABC, with news footage provided by NBC. CBS and MTV have offered to help edit future PSA's. Here is the text of Coach Richardson's message: "When you're on the court, you know what the other side's got, and you know what your team's

got to do. But when you're on the street, you don't know what the other side has. A fight can be fatal. It's time to come together and stop the violence. So, if you're on the street, and the tension is rising, stay in control. Tell the other side, 'It's not worth it, let's squash it.'"

3. Coach John Thompson of the Georgetown Hoyas is featured in the Campaign's second PSA, which was distributed by satellite to all local television stations by the NAB on September 12, and subsequently distributed by Fox Broadcasting to its affiliate stations. Here is the text of Coach Thompson's message:
"Some people say it's not cool to walk away from a street fight. I say they're wrong. It's too easy to fight. It takes more heart, more self control, more self-respect, to say I'm not going to fight. It takes a strong person to have the guts to walk away. So, if you're in a tense situation, and the temperature's rising, chill, use your mind, and be strong. Tell the other side, 'It's not worth it, let's squash it.' And walk away."
4. Ken Norton, Jr. of the San Francisco 49'ers is featured in a PSA incorporating the "Squash It!" message produced by Fox Broadcasting as part of its "Under the Helmet" anti-violence campaign. Norton's message will air in prime time on the Fox Network.
5. President Clinton, in the March 26 *TV Guide*, urged the entertainment industry to get behind the "Squash It!" Campaign. Attached is a copy of the President's remarks.
6. On October 18, Kansas City kicked-off a large-scale, community-based "Squash It!" Campaign with three components: a) a local media blitz, involving television, radio, movie theatres, billboards, posters and T-shirts with the "Squash It!" message; b) community projects and activities that offer positive alternatives to violence; c) a youth empowerment strategy that gives inner-city youths creative control over the media campaign. Attached are two articles on the Kansas City project.
7. The Campaign has received \$1.15 million in grant support from the Joyce Foundation, the Metropolitan Life Foundation and the Max Factor Family Foundation.

Thank you for your interest and support of the "Squash It!" Campaign.

SQUASH IT!

by Jay Winsten

The Journal of the Writers Guild of America, West

April 1994

Harvard's School of Public Health has announced a major new campaign that aims to prevent youth violence by promoting the idea that it's cool to walk away from confrontations without recourse to violence. I write to ask you to participate in the campaign by occasionally using the phrase "Squash It!" to signal decisions to disengage from confrontations.

The phrase "Squash it!" is already an integral part of urban street life. Focus groups conducted by Harvard with tough kids from rough neighborhoods, yielded these findings:

Involvement with guns and violence has become normative social behavior within current street culture, independent of gangs and drugs. When teenagers from different neighborhoods cross paths, a highly-charged confrontation is *expected* to result if one even looks at another the wrong way—a confrontation that can rapidly escalate. Despite this social expectation, these kids sometimes make decisions to walk away from confrontations and accomplish this without losing face.

When two groups from different neighborhoods encounter each other, the following scenario sometimes unfolds: Through body language and speech, each group establishes that it is willing and able to fight. Meanwhile, the leader on one side makes a silent calculation: He doesn't know what weapons the other side has, and whoever loses is coming back tomorrow ("what goes around, comes around"). He declares, "It ain't worth it. Let's squash it!" and the two sides disengage. The phrase "squash it" arose spontaneously and repeatedly in Boston focus groups; subsequently, others have told us that the phrase is part of street talk in New York City, Chicago, Kansas City and Los Angeles.

The "Squash It!" Campaign seeks to build on this positive aspect of street life by reinforcing and validating decisions to disengage from potentially violent confrontations. Our goal is to make this a more prominent part of street culture—and, more broadly, of American life.

We have combined the phrase "Squash It!" with a hand gesture to provide a non-verbal cue. The gesture is a modification of the timeout ("T") sign from sports, but the vertical part of the "T" is formed by a clenched fist (held so that the line of knuckles forms a vertical line).

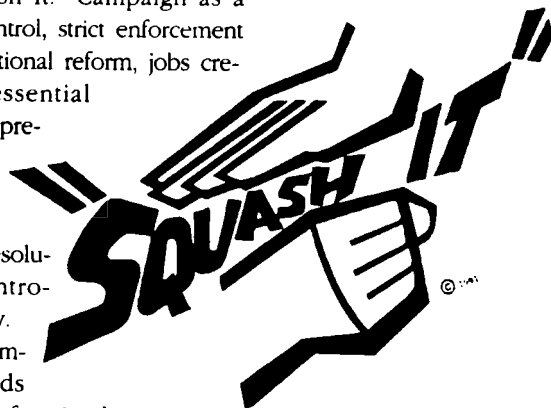
The horizontal part of the "T" is formed by a flat hand; the palm of the flat hand comes down hard on the fist. The gesture tested very strongly in focus groups; the *sound* made by the hands was part of the appeal. Teenagers reported that the gesture "says I choose to block my fist...It's a great defensive posture for Tai Chi."

We view the "Squash It!" Campaign as a complement to gun control, strict enforcement of criminal laws, educational reform, jobs creation and other essential approaches to violence prevention. It is designed to reinforce the impact of school-based programs on conflict resolution that are being introduced across the country.

A successful media campaign, though, depends on frequent repetition of a simple message that masks underlying complexity. This same perspective has guided Harvard's Designated Driver Campaign since 1988, which promotes a social norm that the driver doesn't drink, lends social legitimacy to the non-drinking role, encourages people to plan ahead, etc. Likewise, "Squash It!" grants social sanction to decisions to walk away from confrontations by promoting a shift in social norms and expectations. Popular culture can play a powerful role in shaping such norms, and can do so without depending on solutions to deeper problems such as the breakdown of the family.

As television writers and producers, you can make an important contribution by occasionally using the phrase "Squash It!" and the hand gesture, or by finding other ways to communicate that it's cool and smart to walk away from a confrontation without a fight.

The cumulative effect of an occasional line or two of dialogue, reinforced over time, can be very considerable, as was demonstrated with the Designated Driver Campaign in which you played a central role. Three years into that campaign, the term "designated driver" was in the dictionary, 40 percent of Americans had served as designated drivers, and the incidence of drunk driving fatalities was dropping sharply. With your help, we hope to repeat this success with "Squash It!"



Jay Winsten directs the Center for Health Communication at the Harvard University School of Public Health. He was the architect of the Designated Driver Campaign.

The "Squash It!" Campaign is supported by grants from the Joyce Foundation in Chicago and the Max Factor Family Foundation in Los Angeles.

The New York Times

October 6, 1994

Advertising | Stuart Elliott

Borrowing the methods of product placement, a campaign asks young people to avoid violence.

AN ambitious effort to encourage young people to avoid violence, particularly gun-related violence, is turning to the methods of Madison Avenue to help achieve its aims.

The Center for Health Communications at the Harvard School of Public Health is sponsoring a campaign to persuade youth to shun conflicts before they escalate into violent confrontations. The campaign is called "Squash it," after a term already popular among youth in inner-city neighborhoods when they determine they can withdraw from a potentially perilous incident without losing face.

In addition to traditional tactics like public service announcements, the public health school is adapting the advertising practice of product placement, whereby marketers arrange for their brands to make identifiable appearances in films, television series, video games and other media. "Squash it" is being treated as if it were a soft drink or a soap, with one difference: Advertisers pay to have their products placed, while the "Squash it" project is depending on the kindness of script writers and producers to disseminate its message without charge.

During tonight's episode of the sitcom "Living Single," at 8:30, Eastern and Pacific times, on the Fox network, characters will pass a "Squash it" poster, which remains visible for a moment.

"There are a half-dozen prime-time weekly series saying they're going to develop an episode incorporating the 'Squash it' message," said Dr. Jay A. Winsten, director of the public health school in Boston.

"The goal of using a form of product placement is to promote the social acceptability of walking away from a fight," he added. "We want to see whether we can induce, over the next three years, a shift in attitudes."

Dr. Winsten is no novice at borrowing strategies from the realm of sponsored communications to address societal problems. He was the architect of the Designated Driver

Campaign to substitute sober drivers for drinking ones to help reduce automobile accidents. That project, which also employed product-placement techniques, was one of the most successful behavior modification drives of the 1980's, as movies and television programs presented designated-driving messages.

"I must admit I was surprised at how successful Jay was," said Grant Tinker, the Hollywood producer, "even with people who initially wanted to send him away."

Mr. Tinker, who was involved in the Designated Driver Campaign, praised Dr. Winsten for "his personality, his suasion, his persistence and his ability to get inside the guard that's sometimes there" among "people who control the editorial side" of the entertainment industry.

Still, the "Squash it" program raises the same concerns that Dr. Winsten's previous campaign did: the propriety of proselytizing in entertainment media.

"People turn on the television to be entertained," said Charles Rosin, executive producer of "Beverly Hills 90210," the hit Fox series aimed at a youthful audience. "They do not expect to be given a civics lesson."

Mr. Tinker agreed that "your primary mission" is entertainment programming," adding, "There should be a purity that relates to the kinds of stories you tell."

Both executives, however, endorsed taking sides if it could be done in a low-key manner and the issue was particularly significant.

"I can rationalize it very easily if we all can agree it's worthwhile," Mr. Tinker said, "and it's reasonably subtle."

"The trick is not to do it intrusively," he added. "It never should be done if the tail of the message is wagging the dog of the show."

Mr. Rosin said it was possible to "tell proactive social stories and not preach, be didactic or reduce the entertainment quotient" if "the messages coming through are organic to what the characters do and are not shoehorned in."

Indeed, he added, he plans an episode of "Beverly Hills 90210" in Feb-



Harvard School of Public Health

As part of a campaign to prevent violence, a poster will appear in a scene of tonight's episode of "Living Single" on the Fox network.

ruary or March that might involve "something like trouble breaking out among people trying to get in at the door" of an after-hours club that the series characters frequent, "and 'Squash it' would be a valid way to cool things off, to tell people, 'Chill out, let's not escalate it.'"

Dr. Winsten described himself as keenly cognizant of the pitfalls inherent in adopting entertainment vehicles for social engineering.

"This approach is only for a message with a broad social consensus where there is no 'other side,'" he said.

"If we tried to organize the Hollywood creative community around one side or the other on an issue like abortion," he added, "it would be inappropriate."

Nevertheless, Dr. Winsten said that "for years, Hollywood has sent implicitly powerful messages that in America, violence is the first-choice strategy for responding to interpersonal conflict."

"The goal of 'Squash it' is to alter that equation," he added.

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

October 19, 1994

Page One

'Squash It' officially hits the KC streets

Campaign encourages teens to walk off and reject violence.

By DONALD BRADLEY
Staff Writer

"Squash It" has enjoyed all the hype of a preseason favorite. Now it's time to play ball.

The stop-the-violence campaign, which will try to convince Kansas City youths that it's cool and smart to walk away from a fight, officially began Tuesday with a rally at the Little Theatre Downtown.

"It's time to stop talking and put it out there," said Torrie McDonald, a senior at Pasco Academy who has worked on the project from its beginning nearly a year ago.

About 250 people, including Mayor Emanuel Cleaver, members of the Partnership For Children and about 100 young people — some elementary age — attended the event.

"I see all these little kids here today saying, 'Squash it,'" McDonald said after the rally. "They are why we're doing this. I think it's going to make things safer for them and I'm proud of what we are trying to do."

"Squash it" is street slang popular in Boston, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. It means: "Forget it; it's not worth it — let's squash it." The phrase is accompanied by the palm of a flat hand coming down on a vertical fist.

Jay Winsten, director of Harvard University's Center for Health Communication, believes teen-agers will welcome a way to avoid trouble if they can do so without looking cowardly.

"When two groups meet on the street, they don't know what weapons the other side has and they know that whoever loses is going to come back tomorrow," Winsten said.

Kansas City will be a national model for the campaign.

"I think nearly all young people in trouble are reachable. We have to let them know we give a darn about them," said Winsten.

The challenge to the "Squash It" message is the youth tenet that only punks walk away from a fight.

"But it's the punks now who start the fights and the smart guys walk away," Ramone McGlothen,

a student at De La Salle Education Center, told the rally.

Thirty-three school districts in the Kansas City area are encouraged to participate. The "Squash It" message will soon appear on buses, billboards, T-shirts and public service announcements on radio and television.

During a visit to Harvard in July, Kansas City teen-agers made spots that will run on MTV. The phrase will also be worked into scripts of network television shows, such as "The Fresh Prince of Bel Air."

Janet Belle-Peek plans to make good use of "Squash It." She is principal of L.M. Alcott Alternative School, 1809 Bunker, in the Kansas City, Kan., School District.

"I know most of the "Squash it" talk is about violence in the streets, but I need it here in this school," Belle-Peek said.

A key to the campaign strategy, organizers stress, is providing youths with an alternative to violence.

Already in the works is a plan to enlist role models and provide jobs, said William C. Nelson, president and chief executive officer of Boatmen's First National Bank. Plans also are under way to open 30 Kansas City schools after hours, on weekends and during summer months for job training, arts and crafts and sports.

Squash It

★TOUCH 7867

Do you have more questions about the Squash It campaign? Would you like to be involved? Are you interested in the campaign's rap music? Call 816/889-7827 and enter 7867.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY Gazette

'Squash It' Program Takes a Preventive Approach to Teen Violence

This past spring, the majority of adolescents in a national poll said that it's almost impossible to walk away from a fight. The problem, said Jay Winsten, is that there's no "social norm that says it is 'cool and smart to walk away' from an escalating confrontation."

So Winsten, director of the Center for Health Communication at the School of Public Health, has recruited Hollywood studios, television networks, sports stars, and musicians to help promote this social norm. The "Squash It" campaign to prevent youth violence kicked off Tuesday in Kansas City, Mo. The campaign includes both national media and community-based components.

Winsten, who created and directed the Center for Health

thing for youth violence that he helped to do for drunken driving—"squash it."

"The phrase 'squash it' arose spontaneously and repeatedly in our research," Winsten said. "It's not worth it, let's squash it" is part of street talk in Boston, New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, and other urban centers. It's used to signal decisions to disengage from confrontations. The Squash It campaign seeks to reinforce this pre-existing component of street culture by making it socially acceptable to walk away from fights."

Winsten, who was in Kansas City on Tuesday for the kickoff along with the Center's deputy director, Susan Moses, noted that a successful media campaign depends upon frequent repetition of a simple message. "Squash It grants social sanction to decisions to walk away from confrontations by promoting a shift in social norms and expectations," he said. "The mass media can play a powerful role in shaping such norms."

The national media blitz includes spots on Music Television (MTV), inclusion of the message in television sitcoms directed at young viewers, public service announcements featuring popular spokespersons, such as basketball coach Nolan Richardson of the Arkansas Razorbacks and coach John Thompson of the Georgetown Hoyas, and a pre-movie slide that will be projected in 1,600 AMC Theatres.

In his message on national television, Thompson says, "Some people say it's not cool to walk away from a street fight. I say they're wrong. It's too easy to fight. It takes more heart, more self-control, more self-respect, to say I'm not going to fight. It takes a strong person to have the guts to walk away. So, if you're in a tense situation, and the temperature's rising, chill, use your mind, and be strong. Tell the other

side, 'It's not worth it, let's squash it.' And walk away."

There's also a hand gesture, developed by Winsten and Susan Moses: a stylized "T" based on the time-out gesture in sports. The Squash It gesture is formed by the palm of a flat hand coming down onto a vertical clenched fist. The gesture, Winsten said, is meant to be "macho" and tough-looking, so that kids don't feel they are sending a signal of weakness when they use it as a nonverbal cue.

"We chose to work with Kansas City to field-test the campaign's community-based component because the leadership of Kansas City has a remarkable ability to work together to solve complex social problems," Winsten said.

In Kansas City, local television and radio stations are running public service announcements, buses are sporting signs with the Squash It logo, the *Kansas City Star* placed the Squash It message on 3,500 newspaper vending boxes, and Gannett Outdoor donated billboards to display the poster.

Urban youths are playing a leading role in designing Kansas City's media campaign. For example, 10 Kansas City youths—some of whom were carrying guns when the project began—were flown to Boston this past summer for a Harvard short course in marketing and advertising to enable them to organize Kansas City's media campaign.

Squash It's national media campaign is designed to reinforce and validate school-based programs that are teaching conflict mediation skills that are being instituted across the country.

Kansas City's community-based initiative, run locally by the Partnership for Children with guidance from Harvard, addresses the critical question: What are



Logo by Sig Purwin

Poster for Squash It

Communication's hugely successful Designated Driver Campaign in 1988, hopes to do the same

**'The phrase 'squash it'
arose spontaneously and
repeatedly in our research.
It's [street talk] used to
signal decisions to
disengage from
confrontations.'**

**— Jay Winsten, director of the Center
for Health Communication**

kids being offered as an alternative to violence?

The Partnership's response to this question includes the development of new programs in four areas under the Squash It umbrella:

- A place to go. The Kansas City, Mo., School District has committed to opening 30 schools during nonschool hours within the next 18 to 24 months.

- Training. "You can't just one day decide you're gonna walk away when somebody's frontin' you," says Chris Hill, one of the youth members of the Squash It campaign. "It's hard to back down, you have to practice and learn how." Youth trainers will teach other young people how to avoid escalating confrontations.

- Jobs. Employing youths during the summer, into the school year, and through the following summer will help to build relationships between young employees and employers—giving young people a sense of hope about the future.

- Role models. The Squash It campaign hopes to recruit 30,000 adult mentors for Kansas City area youths.

The Kansas City campaign has received financial support from the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and Affiliated Trusts, the Heart of America United Way, and AMC Entertainment Inc.

The national campaign is supported by grants from the Joyce Foundation, the Max Factor Family Foundation, and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.

CLINTON

Violent crime: It's the No. 1 concern of Americans in recent public-opinion polls. Beginning last week, public-service ads featuring President Bill Clinton started to appear on TV stations across the United States. Those ads are aimed at encouraging Americans to work together against violence—especially violence suffered by children. To mark the release of those 30- and 60-second spots, President Clinton—surprisingly focused, amid the furor of the Whitewater crisis and the battle for his health-care plan—met with TV GUIDE for an exclusive interview in the Oval Office of the White House. The conversation was edited for length.

on TV's CLOUT

The President takes time out to talk about the nation's No. 1 concern—violence—and the power of TV to curb it

BY NEIL HICKEY AND PETER ROSS RANGE

TVG: Mr. President, why did you make these public-service ads—and what do you expect to achieve?

CLINTON: In November, we were getting ready for the 16th birthday of *Meet the Press*. I said, "I wish we could do something to [use] whatever influence the President has with children to change the psychology that leads to so much of this mindless, reactionary violence." So we contacted the Ad Council and it all happened. I've always believed that television has great power for good. It should entertain, it should inform. But when society is overwhelmingly on the side of a certain objective, it can also instruct and be used to change people's behavior. [Consider] the impact of the campaign for using seat belts and the impact of public informa-

tion on smoking. Smoking has declined markedly. More people use seat belts. The more ads we have telling you drugs kill you, the more kids don't use them.

TVG: Why are your ads focused on children?

CLINTON: I've been very moved by all these kids who've been shot at or around their school. I talked to a woman whose 22-year-old son was killed by his best friend. I talked to a man who had to tell a woman her son had been killed by his big brother, fighting over a television channel. Young people watch a lot of television at an impressionable age. I think we can reach them. We have got to find ways that they can work out their differences, their frustrations, their anger, their desires, yet not resort to violence.

TVG: Does TV violence inspire real violence, in your opinion?

CLINTON: First of all, the answer is, I don't know. I don't know that anybody knows. But I can tell you what I *think*—that any given show is more a reflection of what's going on than a cause of it. But because there are so many young people today who spend too much time in front of the television, and have too few other things to do—or because they don't have parental supervision—the cumulative impact of it is to make people almost sub-

A lot of stuff is the natural development of human nature, given a certain set of circumstances.

TVG: In a December speech in Los Angeles, you jawboned the entertainment industry to clean up its act. Do you detect any improvement since then?

CLINTON: There's been an effort among a lot of the networks to reduce the indiscriminate violence content of their programs. And, of course, they agreed last month to have an independent monitor [to keep a tally of violent scenes]. And I was

very pleased by that. I now hope the energies of the industry will be turned to some affirmative efforts. Maybe the White House will have to organize and direct that strategy. To get more real involvement of the entertainment community in an affirmative way, maybe we'll have to organize it from here.

I know that Dr. [Jay] Winsten [of Harvard], the fellow who developed the designated-driver thing, is working on that "Squash It" project aimed at injecting into TV series scenes depicting the characters walking away

from highly charged or potentially violent confrontations. That's intriguing to me. I understand that the networks may be reluctant to incorporate some of those things into their scripts. I'd like to see them really take it seriously [and] see what can be done about it. When people see it unfold in the drama of television, the power of example is more powerful than people just preaching at you.

TVG: There are nine bills pending in Congress aimed at reducing TV violence. Can legislative action solve this?

CLINTON: I would prefer that we do it voluntarily, as a national cause, without legislation. Just work to channel the brilliance and the power of the entertainment industry to try to deal with these things.

TVG: Still, Attorney General Janet Reno at a Congressional hearing said that she



consciously more prone to violence and more willing to accept it. So there is a synergy that can be very destructive, but it's not fair to put it all on this or that program.

TVG: This is a kind of intuitive deduction on your part?

CLINTON: It's what I think. There have been studies that suggest this, of course. Every time a study comes out, I try to assimilate the findings and listen to the arguments. But I frankly think the common-sense conclusion is that you can't say, with rare exceptions, that any specific show would cause a specific conduct. It's the impact of all this programming pouring into home after home after home where there is too little family structure, too little time organized around learning and other activities. So that it fills a vacuum in a way that is not constructive.

N E W S R E L E A S E



P.O. Box 900
Beverly Hills, California 90213

FOX BROADCASTING COMPANY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, May 19, 1994

Contact: Carolyn Prousky
(310) 203-1425

FOX'S 'SOUTH CENTRAL' HELPS LAUNCH HARVARD 'SQUASH IT' PUBLIC SERVICE CAMPAIGN

**Special One-Hour Episode About Youths and Guns Airls May 24
FOX Will Air PSA Addressing Violence Following the Episode**

FOX's critically acclaimed series *SOUTH CENTRAL* will be the first prime-time television program to use "Squash It," the campaign slogan of the Harvard School of Public Health. The important message is incorporated into a special one-hour episode of *SOUTH CENTRAL* Tuesday, May 24 (8:00-9:00 PM ET/PT) that deals with the controversial and socially important subject of youths and handguns. In addition, following the broadcast, FOX will also air a 30-second public service announcement featuring series star Larenz Tate urging young viewers to walk away from violent confrontations.

"Squash It," is a phrase used by teenagers who want to disengage from violent confrontations. Dr. Jay Winsten, director of the Center for Health Communication at the Harvard School of Public Health, encourages television producers to write storylines depicting kids choosing not to fight.

"Popular culture can play a powerful role in shaping social expectations," said Winsten. "The producers of *SOUTH CENTRAL* have made an important contribution by focusing on the dangers of handguns and by communicating that it's cool and smart to walk away from confrontations without violence."

-more-

SOUTH CENTRAL SQUASH IT - PAGE 2

In the episode, Andre (Larenz Tate) steals his mother's (Tina Lifford) gun for protection on a cross-town bus trip to visit his girlfriend. After brandishing the weapon during a series of confrontations, Andre comes to realize that arming himself is not the best way to solve his problems. It is during one of the confrontations that a young teenager tells Andre to "Squash It," signalling to Andre that he does not want to use violence to resolve their conflict.

"'Squash It' has the potential to be a very effective way for young people to defuse potentially lethal confrontations involving guns," said Michael Weithorn, SOUTH CENTRAL's producer. "Our hope at 'South Central' is that, by portraying the 'Squash It' moment in the show as emerging from a realistic confrontation between Andre and another boy, we will have more impact on the behavior of our young viewers than we would be being pedantic or preachy."

-FOX-

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

METROPOLITAN EDITION ★★

KC leads effort to 'squash' violence

Area program to reduce is first in a national effort.

By DONALD BRADLEY
Staff Writer

Get ready for "Squash It," Kansas City.

The slogan is the new battle cry for youths trying to fight back against violence on their streets. To "squash it" means to walk away from a fight.

Beginning in September, Kansas City will be saturated with posters, billboards, T-shirts, slides in AMC movie theaters and public service announcements on radio and television, all pitching the "Squash It" slogan and its accompanying hand symbol — a vertical, clenched fist under a flat hand. It will even appear on the sides of ATA buses.

The Kansas City campaign, sponsored mostly by the Partnership for Children, was announced Friday at a national conference of the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth at the Westin Crown Center hotel.

The hope is that when teen-agers or gangs confront each other, one side will flash the sign and say, "It's not worth it. Let's squash it."

Youths involved in the project say most fights and shootings start over petty things anyway, such as a wrong look, a bump on the dance floor and "Home boys looking at too many ladies."

But walking away from a fight has always been perceived as a sign of weakness. The youths hope that "Squash It" will catch on and give teen-agers a way to walk away without losing the respect of their peers.

"It will work if we can get the word out that it's cool to walk away from a fight ... that it's cool to live," said Michael Lee, one of the so-called "Squash It" kids.

Rod Wilson added: "Is respect worth dying for? I don't think so."

Ramon McGlothen, another youth, said it was time to redefine a punk.

"It used to be, you walk away from a fight, you're a punk," Ramon said. "Now it's the punks that are starting the fights."

The "Squash It" architect is Jay Winsten, an associate dean at Harvard Uni-

versity's School of Public Health. He is also credited with developing the "designated driver" campaign to combat drunk driving.

Winsten is pushing Hollywood and the television industry to use the slogan and symbol in movies and programs. It's already worked its way into the script of "South Central" on the Fox Network.

Kansas City was selected to be the national prototype partly because of activities of the Partnership for Children, which is sponsored by the Heart of America United Way and the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and Affiliated Trusts.

If the campaign works here, other cities will follow, said Winsten, who insists that teen-agers be involved in the organization and taking the message to the streets.

The "Squash It" young people were recruited from youth organizations.

Ramon McGlothen, who ad-



Winsten



Ruiz

mits to being a former rowdy himself, said the pacifist angle was a tough sell in his neighborhood.

"But if I can help save one life, I'm doing my job," Ramon said.

Mike Ruiz, another of the youths, wrote a rap that has become the "Squash It" anthem. Some lyrics:

*Squash all the violence
You squash all the shame
Squash all the bloodshed
You squash all the pain.*

Key to the campaign's success will be giving teen-agers an alternative to fighting, said William C.

Nelson, president and chief executive officer of Boatmen's First National Bank and co-chairman of the Partnership for Children.

"If we want them to walk away, we have to give them something to walk away to," Nelson said.

Plans call for three Kansas City schools to be open after hours for classes, sports, crafts and other activities. The schools selected were Gladstone Elementary School, 335 N. Elmwood Ave. in the Northeast area, Garcia Elementary, 2640 Bellview Ave. on the West Side, and King Middle School, 4201 Indiana Ave., on the city's East Side.

Nelson also pushed other ideas, such as a "basic training" course to teach teen-agers how to apply for jobs and how to dress for interviews.

Also, there are plans to encourage trade unions to teach vocational-training classes in high schools.

June 25, 1994
METRO SECTION
Page One

July 21, 1994
Page One

'Squash It' program takes teens to Harvard

By DONALD BRADLEY
Staff Writer

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Most of them had not finished high school and there they were in a classroom at Harvard listening to a professor talk about quantitative research.

These were the Kansas City "Squash It" teens. They went to the Harvard School of Public Health because they are tired and scared and angry about the violence in their neighborhoods.

One's best friend had been killed in a drive-by shooting. Another's sister had been shot. Some of them had been in trouble with the law, and some were gang members.

They hoped Harvard could help them make things better.

The lectures from professors may have been the most important lessons of their young lives — and the lives of the thousands of teen-agers like them in Kansas City.

"We had never heard of a lot of the stuff they were trying to teach us," said Torie McDonald, 17, who will be a senior at DeLaSalle Education Center. "But these are the things that we need to know if we're going to go home and make this work.

"I'm a sleepy person, but I didn't go to sleep once."

The youths' goal is to come up with a media campaign to convince other teens that it's cool to "squash it" — to walk away from a fight.

They've seen how minor confrontations over something as petty as a spilled soft drink or a look at a girl can escalate into shootings, stabbings and deaths.

Beginning in September, Kan-

sas City will see what the 10 youths learned at Harvard. That's when their work will appear on billboards, T-shirts, slides in AMC movie theaters and public service announcements — all pitching "Squash It" and its accompanying hand symbol, a vertical, clenched fist under a flat hand.

The concept was developed by Jay Winsten, an associate dean at Harvard's School of Public Health. Winsten, believing the effort will fail if the messenger is a "middle-aged, white, Harvard professor," has insisted that the Kansas City young people write the scripts, design the artwork and compose the music.

So he arranged for a Harvard crash course on public opinion research, marketing, focus groups and how to plan a media campaign.

One of the lectures was on script writing and selecting the audience for public service announcements.

Professor Bill DeJong ridiculed the "Just Say No" anti-drug message credited to Nancy Reagan. He said it was "so stupid it made you laugh out loud," because it never gave children any reason to say "no."

DeJong stressed: "You want people to squash it? Why? What's in it for them? You must give them a convincing argument where the benefits outweigh the costs."

He showed an example of a public service announcement on teenage drinking.

"Who's the audience?" DeJong asked when it was over.

"Alcoholics," Rod Wilson, 17, answered quickly from the back of



Ten Kansas City young people involved in the "Squash It" campaign to stop youth violence are attending college to get a crash course in putting together a media campaign. At the Harvard School

of Public Health this summer are Chris Hill, Lakisha Jones, Michael Lee, Juanito Lugo, Torie McDonald, Ramon McGlothen, Monica Portillo, Xochito Portillo, Michael Ruiz and Rodrigues Wilson.

the room.

"No," Torie countered. "It's for parents of teen-age alcoholics."

She was right.

"We argue a lot, but that's how we're learning and getting things done," Torie said later. "We've been together a long time now and we've been through a lot. We're close."

"Squash It" is sponsored by the Partnership for Children, a collaboration of the Heart of America United Way and the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation. The youths were recruited by organizations such as Youthnet, the YMCA and Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

"These are special kids who for whatever reason have decided to think about their lives in the context of their community," said David White, the director of "Squash It."

'Walk away' ads

On a peaceful Sunday afternoon in Harvard Yard, a grassy quad surrounded by red brick classroom buildings 350 years old, students strolled and relaxed under shady oaks. Scullers raced on the Charles River. A freshman sat on the open window ledge of his third-floor dorm room and played the sax.

Down below, sitting on the mar-

ble steps of Harvard Hall, Ramon McGlothen, 17, and the other Kansas City kids were drawing a crowd. Ramon was talking about what a teenager feels when he gets his first gun.

"It's like a high," he said as the camera rolled. "It's like — 'Yeah, I can kill him.'"

Harvard students and other strollers stopped to listen. Ramon, who also attends DeLaSalle, added that having a gun often ends up getting teens killed.

"Guys always talk about, 'going to their trunk,'" he said referring to where weapons are stored in vehicles. "But people shoot you now before you can get to the trunk."

A couple of Harvard coeds who were watching exchanged glances.

Ramon and the others were making public service announcements for MTV. For nearly three hours, they were the campus draw.

Mike Ruiz stressed the need for older youths to encourage the younger ones to stop causing trouble with rivals in other neighborhoods.

That's what ignites so many drive-bys, he said.

"Young punks start the trouble then us old G's (gangsters) have to take care of it because that punk might be my brother or my partner's brother," Ruiz said.

Juanito Lugo does not know if "Squash It" will work. He has

never been able to walk away from a fight.

"There's too much at stake on the streets," he said during the taping. "If you walk away from a fight, it's like letting someone come into your house and take your things."

Not true, Ramon said.

"You walk away ... who's he going to fight then?" he asked. "Sure, you know, words hurt, but I can walk away from a fight. I know who I am. I got my own words in my head."

Michael Lee nodded.

"I'm walking away," he said. "I'm living."

Winsten, who also founded the "designated driver" campaign to combat drunken driving, is pushing Hollywood and the television industry to use the "Squash It" slogan and symbol in movies and programs.

He knows it will be a tough sell compared to the designated driver. The difference is intent.

"No one ever set out to get drunk and have a car wreck and kill someone," Winsten said. "They didn't aim that car."

"Guns are aimed. Street violence is deliberate."

The Power to Change What's 'Cool'

FORGET BLABBY STATE TROOPERS AND RAZORBACK S&L operators in hot pants. The ultimate rim shot for Leno, Letterman and the rest is the United States government trying to be hip about sex. The new radio and TV public-service announcements (PSA) on condoms constitute a Full-Employment Act for Talk Show Hosts. If the debut is any indication, it's the feds who should be using some protection. One of the first spots announced and quickly withdrawn last week by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention featured a rock star—Anthony Kiedis of the Red Hot Chili Peppers—who turned out to have once been convicted of indecent exposure and sexual battery. Another radio spot, in which a condom is noisily placed over a microphone, is a ripoff of a parody originated by Rush Limbaugh, the noted anti-condomite. It's a long way from "Don't Be a Litterbug."

The problem with all the snickering is not just that 200,000 Americans have already died of AIDS, but that unlike so many government programs, these ads—which also preach abstinence—may actually save lives. And even if they don't sharply change behavior among gay men and IV drug users (the main at-risk groups), they will likely help curb other sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. Because Republican administrations were so afraid of condom campaigns, the evidence isn't in yet here. But look at Africa, where nonprofit groups are entering the war against AIDS. According to the Washington-based Population Services International, 900,000 condoms were sold in Zaire in 1988. By 1991, with condom ads on TV, that number had reached 18 million, a twentyfold increase in three years.

If anything, Americans are more susceptible than Zairians to media-induced behavior modification, especially the at-risk kids who—conveniently enough—watch a disproportionate share of television. In recent years, attitudes toward smoking, drugs and drunk driving have changed more quickly in the United States than anywhere. Obviously, the words and pictures on the air must be complemented by organizational commitment on the ground. The press must be willing to set aside its world-weariness and join the crusade. And the country must be ready to hear the message, or it won't get through. But the potential of well-crafted media campaigns to blast huge holes in social problems is seriously underappreciated.

Perhaps the best-known model is the transformation of smoking behavior. It's easy to forget just how acceptable cigarettes were throughout the culture until the 1960s. Now it's a furtive habit. Television and Hollywood do their part, with only newspapers and magazine ads (including those in *NEWSWEEK*) still playing the glamour game. Even accounting for slow progress among the

young, the basic change is striking. We've gone from a country where roughly half of all adults smoked to one where less than a third do.

One of the great untold success stories of recent years is the effect of a huge, coordinated media campaign on the use of illegal drugs. Between 1985 and 1992, the number of Americans who regularly used drugs declined 50 percent, from 23 million to 11.4 million. Drug use among blacks is down 58 percent. Many factors contributed to the decline, including the sudden death of basketball star Len Bias in 1986. But public-service ads created and placed by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America clearly made a huge difference, not so much for the roughly 6 million hard-core drug users as for young recreational users influenced by definitions of what's cool.

The same is true of the "designated driver" campaign, which had little impact on alcoholics but proved tremendously successful overall. Since 1989, alcohol-related auto deaths are down a full 25 percent, after staying flat for a few years. (A raise in the drinking age in many states was also a large factor.) Unlike the traditional Ad Council PSAs, which are routinely pre-empted on local stations, the network ads on drunk driving were carried in prime time and widely absorbed. So were the designated-driver themes inserted in popular TV sitcoms. The challenge now, says Jay Winsten, director of the Center for Health Communication at the Harvard School of Public Health

(which spearheaded the campaign), is sustaining the success. As the anti-drug activists also find, when the campaign becomes old news, the bad numbers inch up again.

That's the real issue facing the media this year on violence. How to keep the momentum of outrage from fading? Daily or weekly death tolls in newspapers and TV newscasts are one way to institutionalize the crusade, just as Walter Cronkite once kept the Iranian hostage crisis front and center with a nightly sign-off ("The 346th day of captivity for the American hostages . . ."). On another level, Winsten is now planning a designated-driver-style campaign against violence, complete with a new slogan inserted in ads and sitcoms. It's a good bet that a couple of years from now we'll look back on the "Squash It!" campaign as a major contributor to reduced teen violence. ("Squash it!" is apparently the latest street lingo for backing away from potentially violent disputes—sort of the "chill out" of the '90s.)

After attacking violence (even the verbs are tricky on this one), the nonprofits, the media and the government should move on to teen pregnancy, the root of so many other social pathologies. Then: stop. Or public-service media campaigns, tremendously valuable if tightly focused, will expand to the whole litany of social causes and become a real joke, instead of just an easy one.



Condom ad: Powerful—despite the jokes

The TV Column

By John Carmody
Washington Post Staff Writer

The creator of the successful designated driver campaign in the mid-1980s has sent a letter to 750 television producers asking for cooperation in a new "Squash It" anti-violence campaign . . .

Jay Winsten, director of the Harvard Center for Health Communication and an associate dean



of the Harvard School of Public Health, had considerable support from Hollywood in getting the designated driver message out through TV scripts, and is asking for the same kind of help with the anti-violence message . . .

The phrase "squash it" is already part of street language in many cities around the country and Winsten has also come up with a hand gesture to accompany it. The gesture is based on the timeout signal used in sports. In this variation, says Winsten, the vertical part of the T is formed by a clenched fist and the horizontal part by a flat palm coming down hard on the fist . . .

The campaign already has a logo, created by Sig Purwin, the Woods Hole, Mass., artist who created the original designated driver art . . .

In his letter, Winsten told the TV producers that they would "make an important contribution by occasionally using the phrase 'Squash It!' and the hand gesture, or by finding other ways to communicate that it's cool and smart to walk away from a confrontation without a fight . . .

"The cumulative effect of an occasional line or two of dialogue, reinforced over time, can be very considerable" . . .

A pilot program, due to be launched full scale in late spring, is planned in Kansas City, with support from major civic leaders. U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno will meet there tomorrow with 18 teenagers who are helping run the pilot . . .

The Washington Post

February 4, 1994

Boston Sunday Globe

It's not worth it; squash it

ELLEN GOODMAN

If you are despairing, if you think it's impossible to change human behavior, Jay Winsten has a suggestion. Remember the egg industry.

He drops this hard-boiled thought into a conversation about spiraling violence in the cities and escalating hopelessness in the public attitude. The list of causes and cures for violence – gun proliferation, family breakdown, job creation, housing, schools – is long enough to seem insurmountable.

But Winsten, a former molecular biologist who became a public health guru, has another list. It holds some of the success stories about efforts to change human behavior: Fewer eggs eaten. More seat belts worn. The decline of smoking. And, of course, the rise of the designated driver.

On the wall behind him a festive pink poster fairly explodes with the message: "The Designated Driver is the Life of the Party." It's a reminder that this office at the Harvard School of Public Health has been central for a careful media campaign against drunken driving.

For five years, a combined force from Harvard and Hollywood has worked through media

messages to create a new social role: the designated driver. More than 140 references, story lines or public service announcements on television have been built around this concept.

Winsten figures that this adds up to \$100 million worth of messages – roughly the amount needed to introduce a new commercial product nationwide. But in this case, the new product is a social norm: The driver doesn't drink. It's one strong reason the number of alcohol-related fatalities has gone down from about 23,000 a year to about 17,000.

Now, however, those who see violence as a public health catastrophe hope to use the same approach to change attitudes and behavior on the streets.

This project began when Winsten was handed a batch of letters penned by Chicago children for a bank that invited them to write about their neighborhood. Instead of cheery little notes about home and hearth, the children wrote bleak truths: "I don't like my neighborhood much, because they shoot too much. They might shoot me. So, I stay in the house."

Then Winsten went to listen to groups of teen-age boys in the nearby Mission Hill neighborhood of Boston. These were not hard-core drug dealers and criminals. They were 15-, 16- and 17-

year-olds who wore their fear like a damp T-shirt under a macho sweater. These were boys who fought because it was the thing to do.

"It's reached the point," says Winsten, "that if two kids from different projects or neighborhoods look at each other the wrong way or bump into one another on the dance floor, it will escalate into violence."

But in his focus groups, he listened hard to boys who had a method as well as a motive for backing off. At a point of confrontation, sometimes a leader would say: "It's not worth it. Squash it." And they would.

It turns out that the words "Squash It" are known and used in urban pockets across the country and even in the lingo of rap singers. And soon, if Winsten's group has its way, "Squash It" will become as familiar as designated driver.

What he wants to do is nothing less than create a new norm that says it's smart to walk away from a fight. In his finest fantasy, he imagines Michael Jordan on billboards saying, "What goes around, comes around. Squash it."

His same consortium of Harvard and Hollywood hopes as well to convince television producers, the very people now under attack for promoting violence, to write

story lines for favorite programs that show kids deciding not to fight.

But this is a plan without illusions. Winsten readily acknowledges that violence is more embedded in the culture than alcohol. In a thousand classic movies, a thousand peace-loving men are driven to violent confrontations at a thousand OK Corrals. When he asked the head of a Hollywood writers' group whether he could imagine a hero who had power without violence, the writer said no.

Moreover, the population of young males he wants to reach is the one that has been most resistant to other public health messages. They are more likely to smoke and to drink. They do not worry about cholesterol in egg yolks.

But they do worry about violence. They do worry about dying. They do have a language for de-escalating confrontations.

What the media campaign can offer is a wedge, a way to intervene in violence without being overwhelmed by all the problems of urban America. One way to begin turning it around.

For those who prefer to greet the possibility of change with an expression of cynicism: Squash it.

Ellen Goodman is a Globe columnist.

The New York Times

In America

BOB HERBERT

The 'Squash It!' Campaign

Dr. Jay Winsten, director of the Center for Health Communication at the Harvard School of Public Health, gave us the media campaign in the 1980's that made the designated driver part of the national culture.

A television blitz was the only way to convince many of us that it was not a good idea to spend most of an evening as a reveler swallowing prodigious amounts of booze, and the remainder of it as a semi-coherent, half-blind motorist careening down a highway.

In Dr. Winsten's words, the designated-driver concept "promoted a new social norm." The driver doesn't drink any alcohol. The concept gave social legitimacy to the non-drinking role.

Now, a different situation: Heavily armed teen-agers and children are engaged in a coast-to-coast killing spree that shows absolutely no sign of abating. In New York there is a term called "wettin' the corner," which refers, I think, to the idea of spraying a street corner with gunfire, thus causing it to become wet with blood.

In the eyes of many young people, especially in the big cities, almost anything can be the cause of a murderous attack. In Dr. Winsten's words: "It's become normative social behavior that if you stare at someone the wrong way, or if you bump them on the dance floor, that is more than adequate justification for a fight that can escalate to other forms of violence, including the use of guns."

Drawing on his experience from the designated-driver campaign, Dr. Winsten is trying to enlist the media in a new campaign to turn young people away from violence, especially gun-related violence. The point of the campaign is to convince kids that it is both smart and cool to withdraw from a confrontation.

To a great extent, kids are already doing that. But we don't hear about those instances in which violence does not occur. Dr. Winsten uses the hypothetical example of a confrontation between two groups of three youngsters each. They could fight. But interviews with real youngsters have shown that often there is a tendency to back off in such situations as long as there has been no body contact — no shoving, for example.

According to Dr. Winsten, there is

Trying to
make it cool
for youths
to avoid
violence.

an inclination to back off because one side does not know what kind of weapons the other side might have; and both sides know that whoever loses will show up the next day to get even.

"The kids often decide it's not worth it. They use the line, 'What goes around comes around.' They even have a term they use when they decide to disengage. Someone will say out loud, to his friends and to the other side, 'Squash it!' And they'll withdraw."

Dr. Winsten wants to use the media, especially television, to promote this type of behavior. He wants to make it hip. Or cool. Or whatever the term is now.

He wants to provide young people with a way of walking away from a fight without losing face.

So Dr. Winsten is putting together a major media campaign in which youngsters are encouraged to make a variation of the "time out" sign whenever they get caught up in a confrontation. The vertical part of the "T" would be made with a clenched fist and the horizontal part with a flat hand coming down hard on the fist.

While making the sign, the youngster would say emphatically, "Squash it!"

The kids in the focus groups like it. Initially the idea was for a youngster to make the sign and say, "Time out!" That was met with derision. "Squash it!" however, seems to be eminently acceptable.

The designated-driver campaign was a huge success. Even George Bush and Bill Clinton appeared in public service announcements prompting the concept. And many entertainment programs included lines of dialogue, scenes and sometimes entire episodes on the designated-driver theme.

Gun violence in the United States is far more complex, and developing a national media campaign against it will be much more difficult. The problem is enormous. Even if Dr. Winsten's "Squash it!" campaign takes off, it will only be one part of the much broader Harvard Project on Guns, Violence and Public Health, which promises to be an ambitious assault on the whole peculiar notion that widespread violence is either normal or acceptable. □

A Creative Turn Against Violence

Campaign Enlists Television To Urge Kids to 'Squash It'

By Ellen Edwards
Washington Post Staff Writer

"Squash It." Get used to that phrase. You're going to be hearing a lot of it. It's the slogan for a new campaign to be woven into prime-time entertainment television programming. What it means is that it's cool to walk away from a confrontation—that dif-

ferences can be resolved without violence.

Yesterday civic leaders in Kansas City, Mo., agreed to use their community as a prototype for the "Squash It" initiative, which if successful there will go national. Early next year, says Jay Winsten, who created it much as he created the Designated Driver campaign in the '80s, the area will be saturated with the slogan and an accompanying gesture—a stylized "T" based on the timeout gesture in sports, in which the vertical part of the T is a clenched fist and the horizontal part is made by a flat hand coming down on the fist.

The Kansas City Chiefs have promised a prominent player to act as a spokesman, and local television stations and rap stars will participate, as will the Kansas City Star. The AMC Theaters chain, based there, has agreed to show a "Squash It" slide in its 1,618 theaters across the country. The program is being jointly backed by the local United Way and the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation.

Winsten, a former microbiologist, is the director of the Center for Health Communication and an associate dean at Harvard's School of Public Health, and under his guidance the center is taking on television's current Topic A: violence.

But rather than join the pack of those attacking pro-

See WINSTEN, C8, Col. 1



Jay Winsten hopes to enlist rather than attack TV in a campaign to "squash" violence.

Drive to 'Squash It'

WINSTEN, From C1

gramming, he wants to use television to help change the behavior of people living in a violent world. Television producers are already lining up to cooperate.

"We are asking kids to walk away from a fight, but what are we asking them to step up to instead?" Winsten said yesterday from Kansas City. So, he said, the city will look at creating alternative programs out of something he suggests might be called the 50-50 club, made up of roughly half kids, half adults. The group could create such activities as sports leagues and competitions, art and music societies and debating teams. He chose Kansas City, he says, because there the "leadership has an ability to come together to solve problems."

It is much like what Winsten has done with an annual community saturation Designated Driver program since 1990 on Martha's Vineyard, Mass. Still, he acknowledges the problem of violence is far greater in scope.

"With drunk-driving prevention," he says, "we were dealing with unintentional injuries. Nobody ever set out to cause a drunk-driving crash, to hurt someone. Now we're dealing with intentional injuries with powerful emotions behind them. People are setting out intentionally to do severe bodily harm to another human being. That's a significant difference. . . .

"It can take years and decades to change [behavior] depending upon the issue. Tobacco smoke took 25 years. . . . Smoking used to be perceived as a sexy, attractive habit. Today that identical behavior is perceived completely

differently. Now can we achieve that with regard to guns?"

By training, Jay Winsten is a scientist, but inside is a journalist who has been screaming to get out for more than 20 years. Years ago when he was a student, he wrote a freelance story about how depression in the elderly can cause memory loss—and he got calls and letters from all around the country. "There was such a sense of gratification from the immediacy of that feedback," he remembers, "compared to what we were doing in the lab just then."

These days he understands how to make the press work for him, and he moves comfortably in Hollywood.

It was this ability that got the phrase "designated driver" dropped into so many network entertainment programs—and thereby made it part of popular culture. It was effective in a way that public service announcements and advertisements alone could never match.

"He left no creative person unturned," says producer Grant Tinker, who introduced Winsten to the community of television writers and producers and who is prepared to support him on the violence project. "He insinuated his wares. He's a very good, low-key salesman. He's the first guy to do what he did—use the media to get across a worthwhile message."

Winsten says he believes the creative community is angry at Washington on the subject of violence because writers and producers feel they are being blamed for everything wrong with society. "That isn't true and they know

it isn't true," he says, "and they deeply resent it."

He has been in touch with a number of Hollywood people on the violence project, including David Simon, co-executive producer of NBC's "Fresh Prince of Bel-Air"; Charles Rosin, an executive producer of Fox's "Beverly Hills, 90210"; Paramount Television President Garry Hart; Peter Roth, president of Twentieth Network Television; and Fox's Helen Boehm, vice president for public affairs and the Fox Children's Network.

Boehm says Fox's involvement in the project will be broader than just

"We are asking kids to walk away from a fight, but what are we asking them to step up to instead?"

—Jay Winsten

public service announcements. "The message," she says, "will be reinforced within our programming. The challenge really is changing behavior. Attitude is the easy part."

The idea is to teach conflict resolution, and it is only one part of Harvard's project, which also involves setting up forums on the subject for leaders in business and communications, and the development of a curriculum on the subject that is already in place in several hundred schools around the country. The "Squash It" program is being funded by a \$375,000 grant from the Joyce Foundation of Chicago and \$75,000 from the Max Factor Family Foundation of Los Angeles.

But getting it on television "validates it for the kids," Winsten says. "If it's not simply part of a health education class, but they see it reflected in mainstream culture. . . . What we learned from our friends on Madison Avenue is if you want to work effectively through the mass media you need a very simple message.

"I'm hoping we can work with network television, that we can work with cable television, that we can work with rap groups, that we can work with sports stars. These kids, a lot of them, these inner-city kids, they watch all the black shows especially on Fox, 'Martin,' 'In Living Color' etc. The girls seem to watch 'Melrose Place.' They watch 'Fresh Prince' on NBC. They listen to a lot of rap music and they say that they are glued to sports, so if you can get messages on sports programming you're reaching these kids, especially if you involve sports celebrities in a very powerful way."

He says the choice of spokesmen is crucial and makes the point that drug abuse has not been given the kind of attention it was a few years ago when Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign was underway. "That's an example of how the wrong spokesperson can hurt the credibility of any line," he says. "She was not a credible spokesperson for many sectors of young people. . . . You have to be very, very careful in who's embracing this message for you publicly."

Early in the fall, Winsten began meeting with focus groups of young people from Boston's inner city. At first he thought "Time Out" might be the slogan he was looking for. But he found it was simply not something these kids would say. "Squash it" was.

On a recent late afternoon in Boston, he sat around a table with six young people from the tougher part of town, eating pizza, drinking Cokes and talking about the violence that is part of their daily lives.

All these young people live in a difficult world filled with an undercurrent of violence. One's brother was recently killed. They knew a guy who got murdered over a gold chain. One 16-year-old girl, when asked for the name of a parent or someone who is responsible for her, said she lives alone: "I am responsible for myself." And one teenage youth, talking about all the killings he has known of, said quite simply, "I hope to die on my own."

Winsten read them something one of them had said the week before about

one way to stop a confrontation:

"Somebody said, 'Don't stoop to their level. Just squash it. Tell your boys it ain't worth it. . . . You might take a chance on losing yourself or one of your boys. You don't lose face if you decide to just walk away. . . .' Now is that true? Could you actually say out loud, 'Squash it?'"

The five young men and one woman agreed that they could say it, and that they do. "People will say, what's there to fight for?" said one of the teenagers. "Let's just squash it. Just chill. 'Cause people say to themselves, like, he might have [a weapon]. I ain't going to say nothing about it. Just squash that, you know?"

"Yeah," said another. "You got to say squash it."

"You hear that," chimed in another, "and it's over with."

"Here's how Mission squashed it with the Hornets," said one, referring to an encounter between two Boston gangs. "The Hornets came to Mission. They were supposed to play a ball game. All right. Everybody was looking at everybody all crazy, and then one person stepped out and it was like, What's the need? What's the need? Know what I'm saying? We don't know each other. We ain't got nothing to fight for. Let's put it to an end. And it was like, yeah, that's true. We ain't got no sense to be fighting. Shake hands. Like squash it."

Winsten has been deeply affected by the whole thing, he says. "It keeps me awake at night. I'm taking it a little too seriously. But you meet these kids and they tell you, 'You know the media, the news media overblows it, it's not that bad.' 'How many of you have relatives who've been murdered?' Almost every hand goes up. And 'My cousin was shot dead yesterday.' 'I got knifed when I was in Philadelphia.' Two kids say a bullet flew right through the window in the apartment they were in in the projects. And I said, 'But it's not so bad?' Unbelievable."

January 12, 1995

The Honorable Hector L. Colon Mendoza
Mayor
Gobierno Municipal De Guayama
Apartado 360
Guayama, Puerto Rico 00785

Dear Hector:

Thank you for your support of the crime bill. I appreciate hearing your kind words of encouragement.

I share your belief that this new law will help communities get the resources they need to effectively fight crime and violence. Working together, we can begin to build a lasting peace on our streets and in our neighborhoods.

Thanks for your involvement and interest in this important issue.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON

BC/MHM/MM/lynn (Corres. #1992599)
(1.mendoza.hlc)

cc: Jose Cerda, 222 OEOb
cc: IGA