

**From:** "Khadija K. Swims" <SWIMSK@student.gvsu.edu>  
**Date:** Tue Aug 17, 2004 2:12:55 AM America/New\_York  
**To:** COOKJULE@COVAD.NET  
**Cc:** BARRETR2CI.ALBANY.NY.US  
**Subject:** 2004 NGCRC Conference

Mr. Barrett,

I would like to first start off by introducing myself. My name is Khadija Swims, and I am a student at Grand Valley State University, in Allendale Michigan, majoring in criminal justice. I attended the 2004 NGCRC Conference in Chicago and was particularly impressed with your lecture, "Youth Gangs: The lure and Why Their Getting Younger!!". I wanted to personally let you know how much of an impact your lecture had on me and how it increased my desire to work with at-risk and disadvantage youth. I agree that our youth are impressionable and often time wonder around lost and misguided in life. Not only that, the media and the entertainment industry often glamorize the "thug life" by enticing young children with images of fast money, fancy cars and power. When a child is subjected to these images daily, they start believing this is the normal way of life. I must admit, I too as a youth was once attracted to the fancy cars, fast money and the status of being the powerful "drug dealers" girlfriend. I was from a broken home and the product of a teenage mother. I grew up surrounded by those well educated in the street game, and seen, heard and learned things that a child should never be exposed to. I could have easily fallen through the cracks, and became one of the many statics discussed at the conference. Fortunately, I was blessed with a strong support system consisting of Grandparents, aunts and uncles, who provided me with the support and encouragement I needed to get on the right track. Unfortunately, many children do not have the support and encouragement needed to survive in this challenging society. That is why more people like you are needed to help guide our youth. I have a tremendous amount of respect for you and the work that you do. I know at times your job may become very stressful, however keep fighting! Your time, effort and support mean more to a child than you may ever realize. You touched me with your lecture as I know you have touched many youths. I commend you for the outstanding job you do.

Sincerely,  
Khadija K. Swims