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Student commentaries

Life goes on in South Central L.A.

By now, everyone has heard of the problems facing South Central Los Angeles. Newspaper articles, radio programs, and television news reports have covered stories such as drug house raids, police efforts to stop gang violence, and the depressing tales of young innocent victims of drive-by shootings. Everyone has heard the expert's opinion on how they would end the crisis in South Central.

Law enforcement agencies believe that tougher laws and more prisons are the answer. Others say that recreation, better schools, parental responsibility, and socio-economic growth are valuable solutions. While many of these experts discuss and debate ideas and plans to cure the ills affecting South Central, life goes on.

Day by day, life remains the same in the community. A few houses still have iron bars attached to door and windows. Graffiti, with the names of the neighborhood gangs, can be seen on the walls of several shops. Weeds continue to grow in empty lots where buildings once stood. And then, there are the

old deserted buildings, unused, boarded up, decaying.

I wonder, if ancient structures such as the now abandoned Balboa Theater in South Central were still in operation, could it be the place where a young man or woman looking for a job could get it instead of going into the drug business? Could it be the place for families who live in the community to watch a movie without traveling far from home? Today, the doors of the Balboa are closed. The building is up for sale, and chances are it will be converted into another swap meet, another piece of history of South Central lost. The bar gate separates the past from the present, giving thought of what could have been. It is the same story for all of the deserted buildings that used to be grocery and department stores, bowling alleys, etc, images of what could have been.

However, the media doesn't show that side of South Central as often as it does the gangs and drugs. The one thing people outside the community know about it, is that it's a bad place and that they should avoid it as

much as they can. The only time when they do pass through, they are headed to either the Coliseum or the Great Western Forum to catch a sporting event. Those who live outside South Central don't look at it as a place that is suffering. Despite all that is happening around them, the residents deal the best they can under the conditions they live in.

Not everyone who lives in South Central is a gangbanger, or a drug dealer. Most young people who live in these areas want to make the most out of themselves by getting a good education or a good job. Because of the pictures the media presents, it's a lot tougher for the individual coping with the pressure from within and without the community.

So when I hear the experts talk about ways to improve South Central and when I walk the streets and see what could have been and reflect on the present, all I know is that life goes on.

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