

## **Transcript of Podcast Episode - Why Gangs Are Created And What Can Be Done To Shift The Violence with DJ Batiste**

BECKY: Welcome to "Real Talk for Real Teachers." I'm Dr. Becky Bailey, the creator of Conscious Discipline, expert in developmental psychology, education, and a lifelong teacher and learner. For those listening who are not aware of Conscious Discipline, it is a comprehensive self-regulation program that integrates social/emotional learning, school culture, and discipline. It provides us seven powers for conscious adults to help teachers see conflict differently, and the seven basic skills of discipline that empower teachers to respond to conflict in a way that instills life skills. And of course, none of this is possible unless we have what we call a school family.

So what are real teachers? Real teachers are real people who have a life both inside and outside the classroom. Real teachers get into the field of education to make a difference in the lives of children. Real teachers deal with the fact some children are hard to reach. And real teachers deal with anger towards children, towards the children's families, other coworkers, their administrators, the school district, and even the government for interfering into an educational system they know nothing about. And finally, real teachers deal with their own anger, disappointment, guilt, sadness at themselves for not making the difference they hoped they would. And yet, real teachers get up day after day and give their heart and soul to others.

Today, we're going to talk about gangs, how they form, why they form, and what we as educators can do about it. We're going to be talking with a former gang leader, DJ Batiste, who started his first gang in fifth grade. Before we get down to some interesting information with DJ, let's look at the prevalence of gangs in our society and how our socialization of children is failing so many children. Current estimates say we have about 33,000 violent street gangs, motorcycle gangs, and prison gangs that involve 1.4 million people. The FBI says these gangs commit 48% of the violent crime in the United States and account for 20% of all homicides in the largest 88 cities. Whoa. If you heard those numbers like I did, this means our educational and societal socialization process is failing minimally 1.4 million children, and we know that number is low.

Socialization is a process by which a person learns to be a member of a group, a community, or a society. It is our charge as a society, our charge as an educational institution, to socialize our members into the collective group in a healthy way that sustains ourselves as a collective. Socialization is a process whereby new members learn the norms, values, and customs that compose a society. In short, it's just how we learn what is expected of us. It happens first in families, then schools and communities, and then society at large.

Now, man, there are many factors that affect the socialization process. Poverty. 22% of all children live in poverty. 43% live in low income homes. Racism, sexism, any form of us-and-them socialization impedes the development of a healthy culture. And as we look out into ours, we can see the violence, the hatred that's caused by this us-and-them thinking.

So what happens when you feel disconnected or marginalized from your primary socializing group-- say your family-- or your secondary socializing groups-- schools, clubs, neighborhoods, et cetera? Several things can happen to these children. One of them is that gangs form to satisfy those missing needs. They are an adaptive social mechanism for satisfying the needs of youth which are not being met through traditional or socially acceptable avenues. That's something to ponder. And on one level, you can see the choices children have-- to be alone and completely disconnected or find an alternative source to get those needs met. And it's interesting to understand that the children who find the alternative source through gangs do less harm to society than those who stay out on the fringes, all alone, and act out on themselves or others as we've seen in many of these mass shootings.

Today, I've invited DJ Batiste to talk with us and help us understand the important role gangs play to many kids-- so important that they are willing to die or go to jail to be in one-- and how we as teachers can help our children find a more socially acceptable way to get their needs met, preventing the need for gangs. DJ was born to a 14-year-old mother, raised by his great grandmother and grandmother. He was kicked out of preschool and continued to be kicked out of school throughout his education. He's been in and out of alternative ed. He's experienced a lot in his young life.

And he's also gone to college. He's also been promoted at his job. He also speaks around the country and around the world, coming up this summer, on how conscious discipline helps create a school family gang, per se, and how that differs

from a gang in meeting the needs of himself and all the other children that he inspires and the teachers he works with.

So he started his own gang at fifth grade and many run-ins with the law, but we'll let DJ tell you about that. So welcome DJ Batiste to "Real Talk for Real Teachers."

DJ: Thank you, Doc. Thank you for having me.

BECKY: So what we want to do is kind of paint a picture for our listeners, DJ, to say, how did it come about, growing up, that gangs were an option for you? I mean, how did all that start so that you somehow got to the point where, by fifth grade, you had your own gang? So start it from the beginning. How did that come about?

DJ: Yes, ma'am. Well, we, in our environment that I grew up in, Dr. Bailey, when we opened our doors to go check the mail, when we go to the school bus, when we get out of school, wherever we be, that's the first [INAUDIBLE] we see, the first people we see. And it's gang activity. And to be honest, to a lot of young people, that's the people that we look up to, including myself.

When you're young, you don't understand the true things that's really important in life. And when I was young, I felt like having a nice car, having money all the time, having drugs, having girls. That's what was important.

And I eventually-- I can remember growing older and, I mean, being younger telling myself I will never be a part of a gang. But then as I got older, it became idolizing myself, idolizing because in the school system, I didn't fit in. I felt like people, teachers targeting me. They didn't encourage me and things like that. So I lacked a sense of belonging within an academic setting.

BECKY: So when you got into, say, preschool-- so you started at preschool, right?

DJ: Right, yes ma'am.

BECKY: And so already at that very early age, what I'm hearing you say is that you were marginalized. Were you labeled the bad kid?

DJ: Yes, ma'am, labeled bad. And I'd tell people all the time. They say, you bad. They say, you bad. They say, you bad. So even when I had a thought, something good, I remembered I was supposed to be bad. I've learned that that is called the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Even if I have a good thought, I remember, they say, you bad. This is who you are. This is what people call you. This is who you have to live up to be. So I say to people all the time, watch what you say to young people, to the youth, because that's what they're gonna believe because this is what you're labeling them.

BECKY: OK, so here's what I'm thinking. One of the things they say is important for this process of seeing a gang as an alternative to reaching those goals in life is that when you're real young, you have a lot of free time. So little, when you're real little, you didn't have as much adult supervision. And so you get to kind of run around the house and kind of go out the front door and kind of do what you want. Was that the case for you?

DJ: Oh, well, I'll be honest. My great grandmother raised me. So my grandmother did a lot of work.

And she worked graveyard shifts and my great grandmother was a little older. So I used to wait. You know, being younger, I used to sneak around and wait until she go to sleep and then leave out.

Now, was I able to do it? No, ma'am. No, ma'am.

My grandmother wanted me inside, told me I couldn't leave. Because you know, me being a young kid, once I waited, caught myself being smart. When they go to sleep, I felt like I wasn't being watched, I did what I wanted to do.

BECKY: Right, right. That makes complete sense. I'd have done the same thing.

All right, so let's see what you got. You get to move around a little more freer because you're smart and wise and you were a little sneaky little kid like everybody else. But when you got out and you're looking around, you're seeing a lot of gang activity and you're seeing the way that they got their status and their power and they got their money and you're going, wow, that's something I'd like to have some day. And then you get to school and all of a sudden, you're not successful. You're like, you're the bad kid.

DJ: Right, right. I had began to be an outlier.

BECKY: Right. So now did you get kicked out of preschool, or what happened?

DJ: I did. I was expelled from preschool. The principal called my grandmother, your grandson is no longer allowed at my preschool. And I was four years old.

And me being expelled from preschool was the start of a nasty path in my life. And I really feel like instead of kicking me out, I should have been being taught the skills teaching me the right away because I didn't understand. I didn't understand, and as I look back, I tell people all the time.

The skills is the most important thing you can teach. For some reason, behavior we want to only teach one time. But anything else, we willing to teach them multiple times.

We don't teach a child to read one time. You don't teach a child how to do math for one time. Behavior is just like any academic setting that you're learning.

You have-- it takes repetition, repetition, repetition. And for some reason, I feel like we only want to see the behavior one time. But behavior is just like anything else that you learn. It has to be repetition.

BECKY: Right. So instead of being taught what to do, you were just punished and set aside and just kind of kicked out.

DJ: So what I became was the growing statistic.

BECKY: You were. And so now as you moved up the school system-- so now I'm going to back up just a bit because we have some things that are important here. So your mom and dad were like 14 or 15 years old, right?

DJ: Yes, ma'am. When I was born, my mother was 14 and my dad was 15.

BECKY: And so then that's when your grandmother stepped in and worked herself silly to make you the man you are today, right?

DJ: Yes, she did. Yes, she did.

BECKY: OK. And so let me just get a picture of this. But for her to work all these shifts and to make your life so beautiful, you were with your great grandma, who was a little bit on the older side. So you could kind of move around a little quicker, right?

DJ: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

BECKY: OK.

DJ: And, about like you said. This is my great grandmother. This is my great grandmother.

So you know, I already knew I had a schedule. I knew when she take her medicine. And she would go to sleep and now I'm free to do whatever I want to all night because my grandmother is working graveyard shift.

BECKY: Right.

DJ: Some nights you'd have this 13-year-old, 14-year-old kid who is free to do whatever he wants in the nighttime.

BECKY: Yeah, so you had a lot of free time on your hands to kind of--

DJ: And whether you know it or not, doc, that happens more than you think because in the environment that I grew up in, the mama or the daddy or whoever is the the elder of the house has to work to provide.

BECKY: You bet, you bet.

DJ: It just so happens being in that poverty and that low income and for a lot of those jobs, it takes away. Whether it be in nighttime, whether it be daytime, it takes away from that parent to the child interaction that we need on a daily basis. And we miss a lot of that.

And to be honest, doc, that has a lot to do with gangs too because we seek for that constant-- that consistency, that consistency. And a gang will give you that. It is very consistent, doc.

BECKY: OK, so let's go to that. So let's say now you're moving up. You're been kicked out of preschool. You're labeled the bad kid.

And now you're getting close up to fifth grade. Somehow, you decide or tell us-- lead up to that decision. How did this idea, I'm gonna have my own gang?

DJ: Well, I can remember, Doc, I was always getting in trouble. I was going to-- you know, I felt like the way I got my joy juice in school wasn't from a report card. And so a lot of students who never experience joy juice because the only way to experience joy juice is you make good grades.

That's what they say. Let me see your report card. So for the students who don't have good grades, that means they will never get joy juice.

So when I began to notice, like I say, you know what? I'm a create my own joy juice. It made me feel good to make people laugh. So now I'm willing to sacrifice anybody to make myself feel good.

BECKY: That makes complete sense to me, complete sense.

Now I'm willing to be disrespectful to my teachers. Now I'm willing to strike out. I'm willing to throw something across the road because to my peers, they're thinking, oh wow, DJ cool. Now I got that sense of belonging that I'm searching for that I wasn't getting from my teachers because my name carried itself now.

I'm in the fifth grade. My fourth grade teacher told my fifth grade teacher "You got DJ next year." So now all she can do is think of ways how to make DJ sit down and do right. So instead of building a bridge in fifth grade, she burned a bridge.

And I had to begin to create my own sense of belonging. And doc, it really started with about three or four of us. And I started it and it didn't even have a name.

It was just us as we was together every day. And we got together and finally, I put a name on it. And when I put a name on it, doc, you would be surprised of how many people came to be a part of it.

BECKY: I was wondering about that. Now did you recruit people? How did you get--

DJ: Not one time, not one time, did I recruit anybody. And being young, I'm talking about fifth through eighth grade. That was during that middle school time. I had over 75 members.

BECKY: And so you got these 75 members. They came to you. So they were coming to you looking for something, the same thing possibly you were looking for. And what you--

DJ: No doubt in my mind.

BECKY: OK, and put some words. What do you think those kids who joined you were looking for? Now, you said one thing, which was consistency. What else were they looking for?

DJ: Sense of belonging. One thing about a gang, doc, and you can ask any gang-- and I also want to say to you a little bit about gangs themselves. There are a lot different gangs.

All gangs do not have the same initiation. All gangs do not of course wear the same colors. Gang is really more commonplace than people think.

There's just not no one pyramid that all gangs fall under. It's very complex. So I actually remember just it's like I said.

It started with the four of us and I know they were searching for a sense of belonging. A gang never turns anybody down, doc. Because--

BECKY: Oh wow, yeah.

DJ: --in some way, some form. So you might-we can use you in some way or some form.

BECKY: OK, so--

DJ: So you might have someone who's not a fighter. They not a fighter, but guess what, doc? They smart. So you use them not to go out and fight. We need you to make up logos for our shirts.

BB: Right. So it's every person in that community, every person in that gang, has a valuable position. They all contributed to the gang in some fashion based on their skill set.

DJ: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. Now all gangs also have a chain of command. So within a chain of command is what you have what we call the higher people.

Now you might be what we call a stand in member. A stand in member is somebody who is just a part of the gang and you don't hold any rank or anything like that. So that makes it, but you just a part of the body.

You a part of the body. You are willing to sacrifice everything you have to be a part of this body. And doc, I don't know if you noticed or not, but to me, that speaks volumes.

Because to be in the gang, you don't need any money. You don't get any free things. There are no benefits. But yet you are willing to sacrifice everything you



have just to be a part of something. If that's not screaming connection, I don't know is, doc.

BECKY: That is screaming connection. And I want to go a little further then, OK? So I see that. So these kids have been kicked out of the typical socializing agents-- i.e. school. They've had a little more free time that they can use to move around in life because of the working parents' situation.

DJ: Right.

BECKY: And they have exposure to what they see outside that says this is my only path to kind of an economic future that I'd like to have.

DJ: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

BECKY: OK. All right, so we got that. Now-- and they offer you a sense of belonging.

There's a couple of things kids need. They need predictability, consistency, and a sense of belonging. Now we've talked about belonging. How does the gang give you consistency and predictability?

DJ: Well, consistency for sure because we know one thing. We got each other. That's why you want to be a part of it. That's why you want to be a part of because you know, we had it, it is very, very strong.

You know one thing-- like, no matter what happens, no matter what goes on, you have something that you a part of. And like I said, a quote that one of my life coaches taught me was recognition is what babies cry for and grown men die for. And that's exactly--

BECKY: Yeah.

DJ: --what I've witnessed. I've watched grown men die just to say that they were a part of a body. And when I use body, I'm talking about gangs.

BECKY: Yes.

DJ: Just to say they was a part of a body, doc. Literally, there is not one benefit, not one benefit of the government assistance towards free anything. You are

willing to sacrifice just to be a part of the body. So to me, I feel like that consistency comes from your brothers' actions.

We got each other. You got me, I got you. I'm not gonna turn my back on you, you not gonna turn your back on me. We come from places where we're used to people turning their backs on us.

BECKY: Exactly.

DJ: For once, we see that true consistency. That's what we're willing to die for.

BECKY: And that makes complete sense again. So now did you have-- and so I know you did because I can tell by how you're talking. I can tell by the passion in your voice that this really met some needs. Now there are also codes of conduct? I mean, was there a certain way that you were to behave?

DJ: Oh yes, ma'am. We call it laws and policies-- laws and policies. And once again, I had this knowledge because watching and paying attention, doc, it was-- from a young age, I always paid attention to my surroundings.

So I had a chance to see how things ran. And I saw that structure. It was very structured.

And they called laws and policies. And within mine, immediately I made the laws and policies no bullying. We will not have any type of bullying.

We don't do that. We-- I always had the mindframe of we finish things. We finish things.

So if at any point in time we had somebody who I heard that they came back and told us that they picked on somebody or something like that, no. We had things that we had to do. Meaning, you had a violation.

BECKY: OK, and so was there-- what happened? Was there a consequence to that violation within the group?

DJ: It was a consequence. It was a consequence. Meaning, for you to be a part of this, we don't tolerate that.

And see, all that comes from the head. That's the first in command, second in command. That's what I mean by all gangs are different. Some gangs promote

violence, some gangs don't promote violence. But the world never knows that because they put all gangs under one label, one category.

BECKY: Right, right. So did it ever become scary for you in a gang? Did you ever feel a sense of fear?

DJ: As I got older because like I said, it started in the fifth grade. So you know, when you're in the fifth grade, you got to deal with things like people throwing rocks, people fighting, people-- you know what I'm saying? Things like that.

Once you past that, once you got older, and now you in the ninth grade, now you in the 10th grade, now you able to put your hands on guns. You able to put your hands on drugs. And I was scared.

And I'm not afraid to admit that. In fear, you need fear. You need fear because fear is really what keeps you alive. And that's-- let me explain to you what I mean by that, doc.

Fear is what keeps you alive. Fear is the reason you're constantly looking over your shoulder. If you wasn't scared, you would never look back.

BECKY: Right, so if you aren't on high alert, you're going down. So you're constantly kind of--

DJ: [INAUDIBLE] had a big inside gymnasium where you go play basketball. But guess what, doc? They had a price on it that people from my neighborhood couldn't afford.

So what we had a chance to do was just see that nice building, see all these people out her swimming, hear about kids going in, playing basketball in a nice facility. And we're not able to get in because we can't afford what they asking for to get in. So to me, I feel like it automatically kicks us out without having to kick us out. They never let us in.

BECKY: Right, so then you found another area to congregate. So you found a street or a certain place on the street would be your space, right?

DJ: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

Well, if I feel like if you had that same opportunity to go in and swim in that pool, to go in and play that basketball in that nice facility, to go to the playground where

they got these nice swing setups, a lot of times we spent being conniving, being deceitful, it wouldn't have been spent doing that. We would have been doing better things. But instead, because all this past time we have, this is what we choose to do.

BECKY: Right. OK, so now let's fast forward. So you've gone through this, and certainly you've had many experiences that a lot of people listening would never have.

But then you run into your 12th grade, and you run into conscious discipline, and you run into your teacher Donna Porter, who I know you call Ms. P. So something happened to change your trajectory because let me just ask you this. Are you in a gang right now?

DJ: No, ma'am, I'm not.

BECKY: So how did you maneuver? How did you switch from one gang to another place that you felt you belonged in? How did that shift happen?

DJ: Alright, the gang that I had created is still functioning. It's still functioning, but I have no part of it. You see what I'm saying?

A lot of people didn't wanna leave, doc. When I made a decision to leave and do better with my life because I realized that we needed opportunity, I tried to bring them with me. I tried to tell them, look, we can't-- now that I'm older, I see a better way. As I got older, I began to realize this is gonna lead all of us-- not just myself, all of us-- to three places.

And that's jail, the hospital, or a cemetery. And I had a chance to see that when I met Ms. P. Before I met Ms. P, my life was just like everybody else.

Like, I couldn't see the end. I couldn't see the end in a positive way. And for some reason, since we don't have that vision, we have nothing to fight for.

What Ms. P did was came and she gave me a vision, doc. She made me believe that I can be successful when no other teacher made me believe that. Any other teacher said, you bad.

Any other teacher said he's not going to be successful. They said he's going to be a clown. They said all these negative things. And what Ms. P did was came and she

encouraged me. And for the first time, I begin to believe in myself on the positive side.

BB: And how did that happen? I mean, how did that wiggle into you? Because that's a lot of life to live before you ran into Ms. P. So it probably took a little bit of time, but she wiggled in somehow.

DJ: Yes, she did, doc.

BECKY: Give us something specific. How did she-- I, mean I know encouragement is a big word. But somehow, her encouragement stuck.

Yeah, and another word is exactly what we talked about, those three things that you said that we needed, that a gang gives. And Ms. P began to give me that in a positive way-- consistency. Consistency-- this wasn't in our first encounter, she shared some things with me and she lead me along.

Ms. P looks forward to me coming every. And I'll be honest, I'm speaking about myself because it's my story. But I am a small fish in a big pond when it comes to the kids Ms. P has helped.

This is just my story. Ms. P had-- Ms. P made multiple people feel just how I'm feeling just because of her style of teaching and the things she learned from Conscious Discipline. So just how I'm excited about how Ms. P made me feel, Dr. Bailey, she made every student that crossed her path feel that same way. This is just my story.

BECKY: Right. And so what were some of those things? I mean, I know that she right away saw how delightful and charming and wise you were.

And you became a greeter. Did you think that was like, oh, that's what little kids do? I mean, you took that to heart.

DJ: Yeah, I took it to heart. I took it to heart because she didn't just say I want you at my door. First off, she told me all the positive things about me, one of those positive things being, you have charisma.

People are drawn to you. Before she knew anything about me, she could tell people will follow me. Before our first encounter, she was already able to know that before she even knew I had led a gang for all these years.

She was just able to see it immediately. People will follow you. You have this natural ability to have people follow you.

And then she began to say I have charisma. She began to encourage me. And honestly, that was the first time within an academic setting where a teacher encouraged me instead of belittling me. And that started something. Now that was a ember that continues to burn into a wildfire.

BECKY: And she did something else, now. With the younger kids, you know, we call it a school family. But I think she did too, didn't she?

DJ: Yeah, she called it a school family.

BECKY: How did she create that school family? What made you believe, all right, I believe this woman and this is a school family? What was something that stuck out in your head?

The way she brought it together. You could have took those same group of kids that was in Ms. P's class and put them in a traditional model with a traditional model teacher, and we would not have been a class family. Those same people that I hugged with tears running down my eyes after we left Ms. P class, they would have been crying talking about I'm making fun of them in a traditional model.

It wasn't the students that created that. Ms. P created and she did things by having-- our first week of school, we didn't do any work. All she wanted us to do was connect.

She was willing to sacrifice her first week to have the rest of her school year. And that's something I will never forget. While everybody else was so worried about this agenda, this what you got to do, this what the principal said do, all Ms. P was concerned about because she knew. She knew nothing else matters if I don't establish a rapport with my peers.

BECKY: Exactly.

DJ: They're never going to listen to the handbook. They're never gonna learn this piece. They're never gonna learn this. I must first sacrifice.

BECKY: So I'm just going to sum it up a little. So she took a week. And this is a class you only were in, what, an hour a day?

DJ: Yes, ma'am, and it was mainly for graduation.

BECKY: Right, so she took time, a week of an hour a day class-- because this is what I hear from high school. We can't do Conscious Discipline or we can't do that because we got so much to do and I only see them an hour. She was willing to take that whole time and make you the subject of what she's teaching, not the subject. So she's looking to reach everybody in that room and unite them up, connect them together, and spend the time. Regardless of what the district said, regardless of what the principal said, she stepped out to do all this against forces that say, that's not how we do business here.

DJ: Yes, ma'am. She absolutely did. And the reason that worked, doc, is because she didn't have that mind frame that for some reason those people have that you were just speaking about-- that I don't have time, that I have to do this.

She had the mind frame of, I'm gonna make time because it is that important to the youth, to the future. It is that important that I make time. And I'm so thankful that Ms. P was that type of teaching because because she made time, it has put me in such a better position. One decision that my teacher made has put me in a better position for my whole life.

BECKY: So what do you do now, DJ? Are you employed?

DJ: Oh, yes, ma'am. I am employed but not like a traditional employee. I am not a traditional employee.

BECKY: You have your own business, don't you?

DJ: I got my own business. I got my own business. And it's crazy because honestly, I could have never envisioned that.

I always felt like I was gonna be successful. But between me and you-- well, not really between me and you. I guess between whoever listening, I felt like I was gonna do it in a negative way, meaning I was gonna sell drugs to the top, meaning I was gonna rob somebody until I got to the top.

Instead, now I'm making legal money. I'm doing legal things financially. I'm going to the bank.

I have a bank account. And these things I could have never dreamed of, doc. And the only thing that I want people to understand-- that this could not be possible if it wasn't for them, my teachers.

A lot of times, I feel like people just wait on good kids to come in their class room. Don't miss how we got here. I was disrespectful to my teacher.

What got us national attention is what my teacher chose to do with my disrespect. So don't wait on a good child to come in. You use whatever moment that presents itself and begin to build a bridge right through. Because that's what my teacher did for me. She made me who I was and then brought me to be great.

BECKY: And indeed you are, DJ. And so for those listening, DJ goes around all over speaking, motivating, helping teachers, helping youth, helping everyone, and inspiring them with the skills, attitudes, and understanding to form, I guess, we could just say a class family, which is no different than a positive gang. And no two are the same.

So I've heard you say this. And so I want to sum this up a little. You said in a gang, you sacrificed your sense of safety--

DJ: Yes, ma'am.

BECKY: --to have a sense of belonging and have that consistency. And know that there would be someone there always having your back. So you used fear as the tool you had and the tool you were comfortable with.

And now you shifted from fear as the glue to love as the glue, and you can actually relax your shoulders and look forward. You don't have to turn your head each side being scared of what's coming around the corner. You can look forward long enough to make a vision and put all those beautiful skills that you've collected. And a lot of them you collected in running a gang because a gang sounds to me a lot like a business.

DJ: Oh, it is, doc. It is.

BECKY: Yeah, you have a hierarchy. You have laws and policies. You have-- you know, there's a lot of skill set in there.

There's that ability to individualize. There's that ability to see your members and who can contribute where and when. I can see how that when you ran into Ms. P



and ran into conscious discipline, those are the same things we asked teachers to do.

Let's individualize. Let's teach the kids. Let's use what they've got to support us. So you could take actually what you learned in seeing and just kind of flip it from that negative to the positive and create-- yeah, and created something quite beautiful not just for you, DJ, but for your family and for society at large. So--

DJ: And even now, doc, if you don't me adding this, even now, I just want people to understand that so many of our youth would never get this opportunity if we don't have more teachers with this mindset. So many of our youth right now who's in the second grade, the third grade, the fourth grade-- they will remain a growing statistic if teachers don't be willing to change they mind frame.

If Ms. P mind frame wasn't changed, I would have been expelled the first day, meaning all these things I've had a chance to experience in my life, I wouldn't have. So the most important thing we can do as educators in this field is to change the mind frame of punishment to, like you said, doc, a connection.

Because we will continue to lose youth if we wait on good kids to come in our classroom. And I'm tired of losing youth, doc. I want to create more success stories like mine and the people who I know around me who Ms. P helped. And I'm tired of creating statistics. We have to begin to create more success stories.

BECKY: And if we continue with that notion of good kids, bad kids, if we continue with socializing any of our children with an us and them-- you know, one set may be good, one set bad. Any kind of us and them will not sustain our society because the thems will come after the uses or the uses will come after the thems. And so DJ, I want to thank you for helping us all become a we, helping us understand that, one, gangs aren't going to be stopped.

But what we can do is build protective factors. We can strengthen a positive socialization for kids so they don't have to seek an alternative and create it themselves. And--

DJ: Well said, doc.

--and that's what our society needs to do, and I want to thank you for all you're doing to make that possible. I'm thankful for you and how you help us spread the word of conscious discipline. And it makes a huge difference.

So DJ, thank you for opening your heart. Thank you for opening our eyes to the powerful force that a gang provides and also how we can prevent that and how we can build it in another way and use those same skills in an alternative way to support our society. You've blessed me many times, and I certainly bless you. So thank you again, DJ.

DJ: Thank you so much, doc, for believing in the philosophy of connection instead of correction. Thank you, doc.

BECKY: Yep, we got it. And so for those listening, until next time, I wish you well.

For more episodes of "Real Talk with Real Teachers" by Dr. Becky Bailey, visit [consciousdiscipline.com/broadcasts](http://consciousdiscipline.com/broadcasts). You can also subscribe to this podcast on iTunes, Stitcher, or your favorite podcast app.