Gang/Drug Myths and Facts

About 20,000 violent street gangs, motorcycle gangs, and prison gangs with approximately 1 million members are criminally active in the U.S. today. Many are sophisticated and well organized; all use violence to control neighborhoods and boost their illegal money-making activities, which include drug trafficking, robbery, theft, fraud, extortion, prostitution rings, and gun trafficking.

Myth: Gangs are family.
Fact: Gangs are not family. Many youth join gangs looking for affection. Gangs only look out for their own interests and forget about yours. Gangs are violent...they intimidate, hurt, and kill people. Gangs lead to self-destruction.

Fact: Children are exploited as drug runners or dealers, and sometimes used as gun "minders" because if they are caught they will not face a minimum of five years in jail.
Fact: One in five female offenders have spent time in foster care system.
Fact: 58 % grew up in homes without both parents present.
Fact: 34% grew up I homes where the parents abused alcohol and drugs.
Fact: 60% of females under correctional authority reported they were physically or sexually assaulted at some time in their lives.
Fact: 69% reported that they were assaulted prior to them being 18 years old.
Fact: 32% reported that they were abused by a family member.
Fact: Women are either beat in, sexed in or born into a gang.
Fact: Bloods are part of the People Nation.
Fact: CRIP are part of the Folk Nation.
Fact: Not all Crips wear blue.
Fact: Not all Bloods wear red.
Fact: Crips and Bloods will kill each other.
Fact: BloodS will kill each other.
Fact: The biggest killers of Crips and Bloods are themselves.
Fact: 90% of male gang members are arrested by age 18.
Fact: 75% of male gang members are arrested twice by age 18.
Fact: 95% of male gang members do not finish high school.
Fact: 60% of male gang members are dead or in prison by age 20.
Fact: The average life expectancy of an active gang member is: 20 years, 5 months.
Fact: In the 1970s, youth gangs were active in less than half of the states in the United States, but today every state reports youth gang activity.
Fact: More than 24,500 different youth gangs exist in the United States.
Fact: There were an estimated 750,000 gang members in 2000.
Fact: The 2009 estimate is One Million gang members with 147,000 of them currently incarcerated.
Fact: Of the 1 million gang members, about 40% are juveniles (under 18) and 60% are adults, or about 400,000 teenage gang members and 600,000 adult gang members.
Fact: Between, 90% to 94% of gang members are male. Between, 6% to 10% are female.
Fact: There are approximately 360,000 teenage boys and 32,000 teenage girls in gangs.
Fact: There are approximately 560,000 adult males and 48,000 adult females in gangs.
Fact: Every city in the U.S. with at least 250,000 people has gang activity. 86% of those with at least 100,000 people report gang activity.

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Myth: Gang killings are the result of drug wars.
Fact: Most gang homicides are not random, nor are they only disputes over drugs or some other crime. The vast majority of violent incidents involving gang members continue to result from fights over turf, status, and revenge.

Myth: Gangs are only an inner city problem.
Fact: Different types of cities (urban, suburban, etc) in Los Angeles County have local street gangs. While a majority of the gang related slayings were in the urban core, in the San Fernando Valley, the murder rate spiked 60% in 2001 because of gang related killings.

Myth: Los Angeles is the gang capital of the world and will never again be a place to raise children and live a civilized life.
Fact: Over the last several hundred years, a number of cities in the world have been proclaimed the "gang capital". London, England, was first given this title. Just before our civil war, New York was reported to have approximately 30,000 street gang members. At other times, L.A., Detroit, Philadelphia and Chicago were proclaimed gang capitals. All of these cities, with degrees of success, have dealt with the problem and passed the title on to other cities.

Myth: Youth join gangs to sell drugs, commit crime, and make money.
Fact: Youth join gangs for many reasons. However, while gang members commit more types of crime (and more often) than non-gang youth, many gang members are not heavily involved in crime. Most gang members are not drug dealers and most Los Angeles gangs are not organized drug distribution rings.

Myth: Gangs are tightly organized, cohesive units with stable powerful leadership.
Fact: Most gangs are loosely knit, with several members who fill leadership roles, depending on age and situation. Membership fluctuates and gang members have varying degrees of commitment to the gang. Gang cohesiveness is highest when the gang is challenged by other groups or by outsiders.

Myth: Ever since there have been street gangs there have been drive by shootings. Guns don’t kill people; people kill people.
Fact: Shootings by gang members have increased as guns on the streets have proliferated. Drive-by killings are a direct result of the availability of firearms. People injure people; guns kill people.

Myth: Gang violence is purely a law enforcement problem.
Fact: Most law enforcement officials agree that gangs are a community problem that must be dealt with in a variety of approaches implemented by police, schools, community-based organizations, public health professionals and others in an interactive and cooperative approach to gang prevention and intervention.

Myth: Gangs are not in my community, they are a big city problem.
Fact: Actually, gangs and the gang culture are far reaching in today’s world. Their influence is felt in every city and town in the nation.

Myth: He’s just a "wanna-be", not a real gang member.
Fact: "Wanna-be’s" are gonna-be’s. A child, who thinks, acts and looks like a gangster, runs the risk of being recruited by a gang. If your child acts like he wants to be a gang member, gang members will recruit him or mistaken him for a rival gang member.

Myth: My children are good kids, they aren’t in a gang.
Fact: Like it or not, gangs do effect your children. If not directly gang involved, then through their acceptance of the gang mindset. Emulating gang dress, attitude and life-style can have detrimental effects on your child.

Myth: There are no gang members living in my neighborhood.
Fact: Gang members can live in any neighborhood, regardless of the social status of the area. Gangs are highly mobile and can move in and out of any neighborhood.

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Myth: Gangs only hang around in their own neighborhood.
Fact: Actually, gangs are mobile and are not often associated with a particular neighborhood.

Myth: Gangsters wear baggy clothing and athletic team baseball hats.
Fact: Gang style, baggy clothing has become the widely accepted "cool" way to dress among youth and no longer a definite sign of gang membership.

Myth: I know a gang member when I see one, and I don’t see any hanging around my neighborhood.
Fact: Gang members are harder than ever to identify in today’s society. Contemporary gangs are dressing more mainstream to be less obvious to police, teachers and parents. Behavior is a better indicator of gang involvement than physical appearance.

Myth: There is nothing I can do about gangs in my community.
Fact: Yes there is something you can do. The most important thing you can do is to send the right message to your children and your community. The message is: Gangs are not welcome here!

Myth: Today's gangs are no more violent or deadly than gangs were in the past.
Fact: Gangs today are more violent and deadly than ever. It is easier to get weapons, there are more fights for territory (called "turf"), and more young people are joining gangs.

Myth: Gangs generally do not enlist children under age 12.
Fact: Gangs are recruiting children at a record rate. It's becoming common for them to enlist elementary schoolchildren age 9 or younger.

Myth: Gaining money isn’t the main goal of gangs.
Fact: The main goal of gangs is to gain money through drug sales and other criminal acts.

Myth: Gangs are at work only in large inner-city areas.
Fact: Gangs no longer exist only in large inner-city areas. They have spread to nearly every city and town in the country as they look for new "turf" for drug sales and other crimes.

Myth: Children who use alcohol or other drugs are at greatest risk for joining a gang.
Fact: Drug and alcohol abuse may be one sign of a child's gang membership but it is not the greatest risk factor. The main risk factor is living in an area where there are gangs. The second is a home life where the child does not develop a sense of self or feel support from the family.

Myth: In an area where there are many gangs, parents can do little to keep their kids out of gangs.
Fact: Even in areas where there are many gangs, every child does not join them. Parents can make the difference by: having the right attitude, being good role models, safeguarding their child, being involved in their child's life, and providing a solid foundation for making good, positive choices.

Fact: 23% of reservations in a government study reported up to 40 active gangs on tribal land. 80% of gang members in this study were male, and 3 out of 4 were under 18 years old. The Point: Reservation Gang members are mostly teenagers, not adults which is the opposite of city gangs.
Fact: 20% of gang members on Native reservations are girls versus only 6%-11% off the reservation. 10% of gangs reported that half their members were female. The Point: There are more girls in reservation gangs than in city gangs.
Fact: According to surveys of crime victims, gang members commit about 6% of non-fatal violent crime, or 370,000 out of 6.6 million violent crimes in the U.S.
Fact: 70% of gang members say it is easier to make friends online.
Fact: 89% of kids say they are the major user of technology at their house.
Fact: 41% of kids say they do not share with their parents what they are doing on the internet.

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Fact: As a result of the "War on Drugs" there are one million Americans incarcerated each year. Of the related drug arrests, about 225,000 are for possession of cannabis, the fourth most common cause of arrest in the United States. In 2008, 1.5 million Americans were arrested for drug offenses. 500,000 were imprisoned.

Fact: Tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands or even millions of our children, our young men and women are entangled in the web of the gang lifestyle. It is a lifestyle that is criminal, drug induced and dangerously violent. It is a lifestyle that also gives these young people a sense of power. It gives them a sense of importance, a sense of purpose and by engaging in illicit activity, drug dealing, and murderous activity.

FACT: Gangs/Drug Dealers… Do not have Pension Plans, 401K Plans, Insurance Plans…

FACT: Gangs/Drug Dealers… Do have 2 early retirement plans…. Death or Life in the Penitentiary…

FACT: Education in the key to Success…

FACT: It is your choice…Just make the right one…You will have to live with the consequences.

~People begin to become successful the minute they decide to be.~

~ You were born to win, but to be a winner, you must plan to win, prepare to win, and expect to win. ~

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