

# Portland Street Gangs

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"Down there, they are very organized, and definitely dangerous. You see graffiti everywhere, and if the graffiti says somebody is going to get 'hit', it's gospel! Graffiti is the gangs' way of communicating, and it seldom lies. It was depressing to hear the horror stories and actually see the violence." Sgt. Hollingsworth accompanied L.A. police to the scene of two gang murders while at the seminar. "I spent four hours riding around in Watts, South Central Los Angeles, and other gang territories, and was amazed to find there was nothing for them to do but become likely candidates for gang recruitment." The Sgt. expressed confidence that Portland had gotten on top of the situation early and could avoid California's problems.

Jimmy Brown, Multnomah County Court juvenile counselor, agrees. "This isn't Sesame Street we're talking about. The problem in Portland is serious, but the task force is working with the communities and agencies to the fullest extent. It isn't just a Northeast problem, it's a Portland problem, and requires linkage with our youth to help solve it," he claims.

According to Brown, Juvenile Court has assigned three counselors to work with youth in N.E. Portland. Providing probationary, educational and community services, the counselors monitor youth in and out of school. If a youth is incarcerated, the monitoring still goes one, and, if he fails to follow the directions of the Juvenile Court, he is committed to the state training system.

The counselors are preparing information to present to the Chief Judge and district attorneys of Multnomah County in August to show that a pattern is developing in cities north of Los Angeles.

Another member of the task force, Sharon McCormack, of the N.E. Coalition of Neighborhoods, voiced concerns that the problem, too, would be perceived as mostly existing in N.E. Portland. "It's spreading to other neighborhoods," claims Sharon, "and neighbors are becoming alarmed." McCormack indicated a gang hot-line was being planned to answer caller's questions about gang activities.

A recent incident pretty much sums up why youth in Portland are tempted by gang activity. Police stopped a twenty-one year old on a traffic violation and a search of his late-model vehicle turned up less than an ounce of marijuana. A search of his person, however, revealed \$11,000 in cash, but, because of the small amount of marijuana, he was only issued a citation for possession of a controlled substance and allowed to keep the money. According to police, there was no evidence of the money having been obtained as a result of criminal activity.

L.A. police lieutenant, Bob Ruchhoff, of the department's gang detail, likes to tell the story—which has become legend to all CRIPS—about

the 21-year-old gang leader known as "Way Out", who bought a Corvette, a Rolls Royce, a BMW, and a Mercedes Benz and paid cash for them all except the Rolls, for which he paid \$30,000 down. "He hasn't missed a \$2,400-a-month note yet," says Ruchhoff, "and he isn't even 'Mr. Big'."

Police strategy for combating gangs is to "key on the hard core and build good cases against them and get them out of every body's way."

One task force member voiced concerns that the City's already-dwindling resources would be diverted to prosecution of gangs instead of prevention. "I support the concept of vigorous prosecution," states the member, who asked to remain anonymous, "but it is now time to develop preventive measures that would deter our youth from becoming a 'wanna-be' or 'hanger-oner.'"

The problem has not gone unnoticed by local officials, nor is it being ignored. According to Dan Speffey, aide to Mayor Clark, "Youth gang activity is being closely monitored, and an action plan is being developed with the help of the \$9,996 grant from our office. Additional funding levels will be determined after the task force proposal is received and evaluated."

For Aleem Shabazz, gangs were a part of growing up in Los Angeles. "They were so active in recruiting new members, it should have been a part of the high school curriculum," he states. The former Watts' native was an outstanding athlete at Jefferson High School in Los Angeles, receiving a four-year scholarship to Portland State where he lettered in football before graduating in 1983.

Shabazz claims he was not recruited because of his star football status. "If you lived in Watts or went to school there, you could expect gang contact. Frankly, I didn't expect to reach my twentieth birthday, because, not only were the gangs a problem, but so were the police. They [L.A. police] were equally as dangerous, because more than often Black youth were falsely identified as a CRIP or Blood." Shabazz also claims there is a lack of youth programs in Portland which could offer alternatives and cited boxing, Teen Post and the Boy Scouts as examples. He was also highly critical of the lack of visibility and interest in Portland's Black youth by sports figures and other Black image-makers. "With the exception of Terry Porter of the Portland Trailblazers, they are noticeably absent. In Los Angeles and other cities with gang problems, we have names like Magic Johnson, 'Dr. J.', Michael Jordan and others volunteering time to work with youth. There seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel here in Portland," he acknowledges.

Meanwhile, the community and city officials are eagerly awaiting the youth gang task force recommendations before embarking on a plan to ensure the safety of Portland's streets and neighborhoods.

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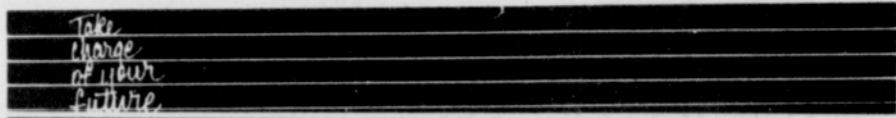
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An old superstition had it that a newborn baby must be carried upstairs before it is carried down. This act supposedly guaranteed the child would rise in the world and have a successful life.

## Help Prevent Child Abuse

Parents Anonymous, a child abuse prevention program of Waverly Childrens Home, is accepting applications for volunteer parent specialists.

Training will be provided at no cost to qualified applicants who wish to share their parenting experience and problem solving skills on the 24 hour parent Helpline or as Child Care Specialists for one of Parents Anonymous weekly parent support groups.

With the help of dedicated volunteers and generous contributors, Parents Anonymous has five parent support groups meeting in the metro area. Volunteer Child Care Specialists provide care and activities for children whose parents attend the group to gain support and learn valuable parenting skills.

The 24 hour Parent Helpline is staffed by trained volunteers who work an 8 hour shift each week from their home, providing support, information and referrals to parents who call with questions about parenting issues, or who wish to join a group. It is the belief of Parents Anonymous that prevention is the best cure for child abuse. If you would like to take this opportunity to share the skills and experience you have with other families, either on the Helpline or with the children, call Sue Kaastad or Debi McFeron at 238-8819.

Pan, a Greek god, was believed to delight in frightening travelers. The word "panic" derives from his name.

## CARS NEEDED AT PCC

Damaged cars are being sought by Glen Fors, Portland Community College Rock Creek Campus chair of mechanical careers, for use in the auto body/auto painting program.

"We are looking for donated cars as well as people who want to make an appointment to have work done on their cars during fall term," Fors said.

Fors explained the college needs about a dozen doanted cars each year for students to use in learning how to repair them. The cars must be no more than 10 years old so parts can be purchased for the repairs, Fors said.

Class members also work on customers' cars. No labor is charged, but a \$10 processing fee and all the parts are paid for by the customer. Fors said the class would handle 15-20 cars this fall and even more winter term.

People can come in now to set up appointments for fall term, Fors said. Contact him at the PCC Rock Creek Campus, 645-4661, extension 7248.

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