

An Introduction to Gangs in Virginia



Office of the Attorney General

Photographs Provided By:

Virginia Gang Investigators Association
Virginia Department of Corrections
Fairfax County Gang Unit
Pittsylvania County Sheriff's Office
Boys & Girls Clubs of Virginia
Galax Police Department
Richmond Police Department
unless otherwise specified

Videos Provided By Dr. Al Valdez and
are NOT from Virginia



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American Violence

Contains some graphic content





Overview

I. Facts About Gangs

II. Identifying Signs of Gang Association

III. Safety Issues for EMS



Part I



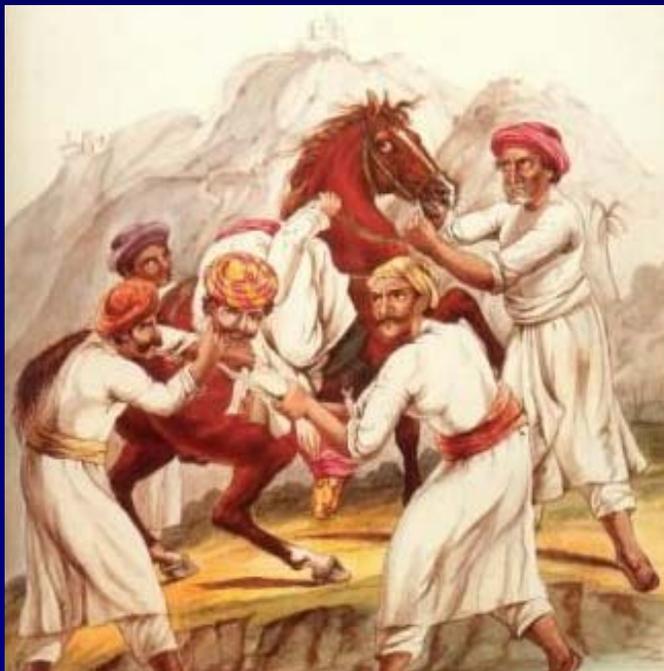
FACTS ABOUT GANGS



Gangs In History



Gangs have been present throughout human history.



The word "Thug" dates back to India from around 1200, and refers to a gang of criminals.

Blackbeard and other pirates plundered the Caribbean during the 1600's and 1700's.



Gangs In History



Irish gangs were a part of riots in NYC during the 1860's.



Gangs like "The Hole in the Wall Gang" and Billy the Kid's Gang robbed in the Southwest during the 1800's.



Gangs In History



Picture from The United Northern and Southern Knights of the Ku Klux Klan website with members in Virginia. This from a 2007 cross lighting ceremony.

Al Capone's Organization and the Ku Klux Klan are examples of prominent gangs in the 1900's.

Gangs Today



Many of today's gangs can trace their roots to the later half of the 20th Century.



*The Sleepy Lagoon Boys –
1940's Zoot Suit Riots.*



*El Salvador
Civil War –
1980's.*



The "Truth" in Numbers

- There are at least 26,500 gangs and 785,000 gang members in the U.S.
NYGS, 2008.
- Large national street gangs vary in organization from the highly structured Gangster Disciples to loosely structured associations of Bloods and Crips.
USDOJ, NDIC, 2003.
- "Homegrown" gangs.



Location, Location, Location



- All major cities report gang activity, as do ...
- 86% of cities with populations between 100,000 and 250,000;
- 51% of suburban counties;
- 33% of cities with populations between 2,500 and 49,999; and
- 18% of rural counties.

NYGS, Highlights from the 2006 National Youth Gang Survey (2008).



AGE – Gangs Recruit Kids



- Gang members generally range from 12 to 24. USDJ, OJJDP.
- 95% of the jurisdictions identified gang activity in high schools; 91% in intermediate schools. 2005 NYGC Survey.
- Gang members are recruiting in elementary, middle, and high schools, and children are often forced to join one gang for protection from another. 2005 National Gang Threat Assessment.

Females In Gangs



- Women are not just “groupies.”
- 39% of all gangs have female members.
- Women are used because gangs think they are less “suspicious” to law enforcement.



Race: Gangs are Diverse



- Hispanic - 49%
- African American - 35%
- Caucasian - 9%
- Asian - 6%
- Other - 1%
- Hybrid Gangs

- NYGS, National Youth Gang Survey Analysis, 2007.

Gang Mentality



- No disrespect may go unanswered.
- Need for instant gratification.
 - "Take what you want, when you want it."
- Distorted view of reality.
- Survival instinct.
- Fatalism.
 - most gang members do not believe they will live past age 24. "Laugh now, cry later."

Respect = Violence



Why do Youth Join Gangs?



Based on the Mistaken Belief that Gangs Provide:

- Respect / Status
- Family tradition
- Excitement
- Sense of belonging / Family
- Source of survival - shelter and money
- Popularity





Gang Initiation

- **Jump In/Beat In:** Perspective members are beat for approximately 3 minutes by members.
- **Crime In:** Perspective members commit certain crimes to be admitted into the gang
- **Sex In:** Females have sex with 3 O.G.'s (original gangster) they can also be beat in.
- **Beat Out:** Members are "beat out" if they want to leave a gang. They are sometimes killed.
- **Blood In, Blood Out:** Recruits must commit a crime by shedding an innocent person's blood to be admitted into the gang. They can only leave by shedding their own blood.

Major National Gangs In Virginia



- MS-13
- 18th Street
- South Side Locos
- La Primera
- La Raza
- Latin Kings
- Bloods
- Crips
- Gangster Disciples
- United Blood Nation (UBN)
- Folk Nation
- Hell's Angels
- Pagans
- Warlocks
- Outlaws
- Skinheads
- Tiny Rascal Gang

Part II



Identifying Signs Of Gangs and Gang Membership



Signs of Gang Membership



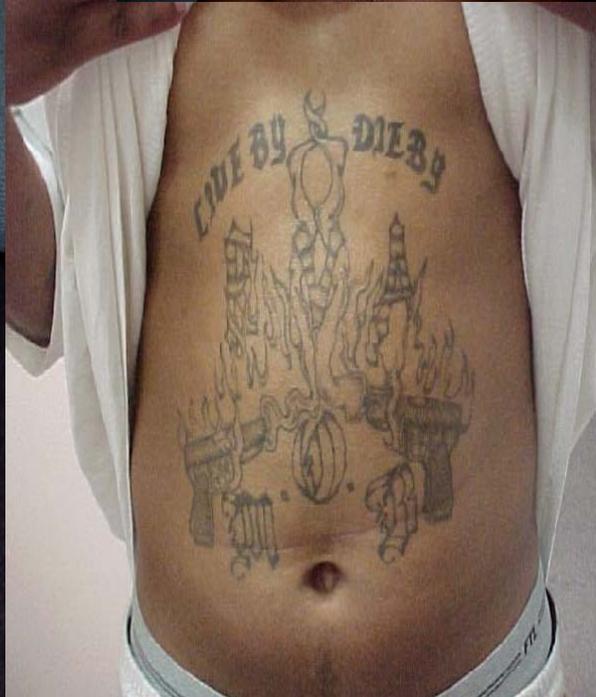
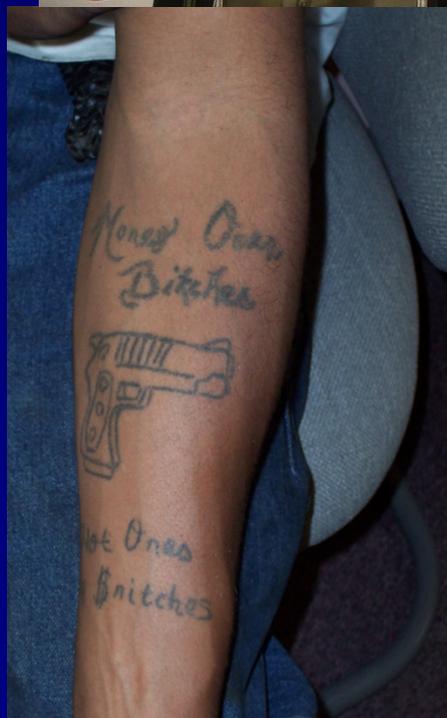
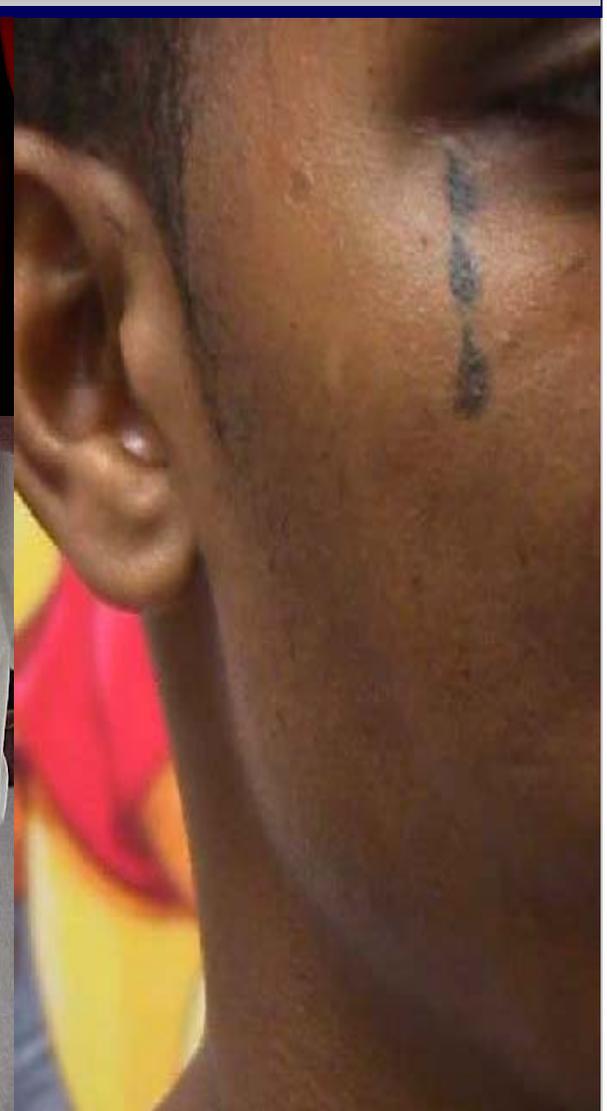
- Self-admission.
- Association with gang members.
- Photographed with known gang members.
- Others identify the individual as a gang member.

Signs of Gang Membership: Tattoos



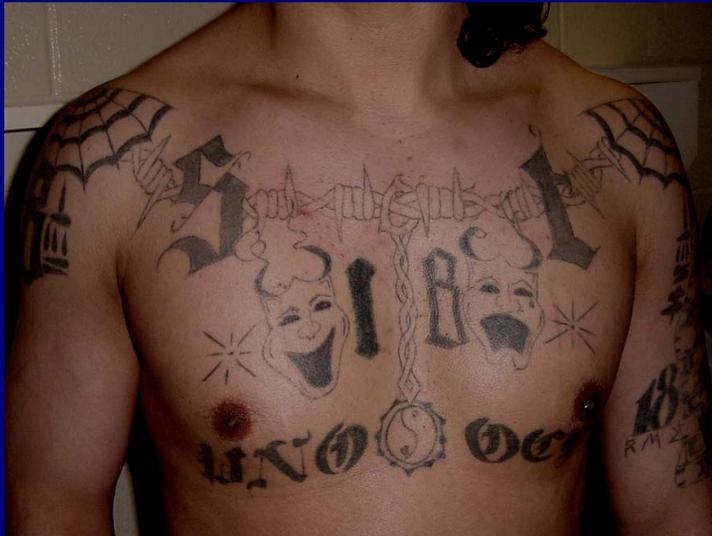
- Are a major part of the gang culture
- Not everyone who has a tattoo is a member of a gang, but
- Many gang members have tattoos.

Signs of Gang Membership: Tattoos Depicting Gang "Culture"

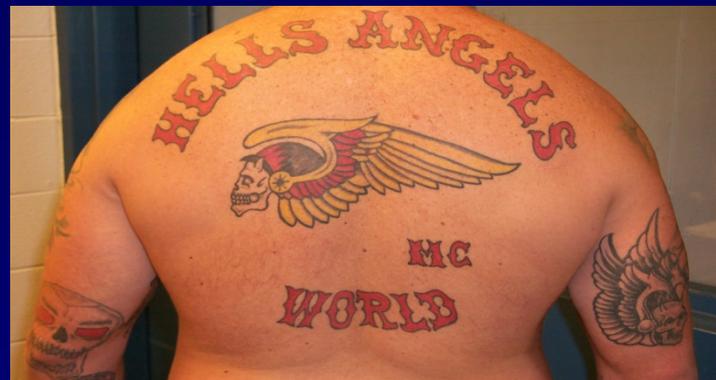


Hot Ones
Bitches

Signs of Gang Membership: Tattoos Associated With Specific Gangs



Signs of Gang Membership: Tattoos Associated With Specific Gangs



Signs of Gang Membership: Hand Signs



- Reinforce identity
- A significant way of “secret” communication
- Communicate insults and threats
- Allows them to attack without verbal communication.

Signs of Gang Membership: Gang Hand Signs



Signs of Gang Membership: “Colors”



- Use of a specific color or colors.
- Wearing clothing of only one or two colors.
- Wearing clothing with gang name or moniker/logo.
- Wearing accessories of only a specific color or colors.
- Gangs realize law enforcement knows about colors, so they may be subtle in their display.

Signs of Gang Membership: Gang “Colors”



■ Most Common Colors Used By Gangs:

- Red
- Blue
- White
- Black
- Brown
- Pink
- Gold



Signs of Gang Membership: Examples of “Colors” and Accessories



Signs of Gang Membership: Examples of “Colors” and Accessories



Signs of Gang Membership: Family



Family tradition and expectations can often be powerful forces in steering children to gangs.

Signs of Gang Membership



- Through school, police, probation/parole, court, or other agency records which indicate gang affiliation.

Review: Signs of Gang Membership



- Self-admission.
- Association with gang members.
- Photographed with known gang members.
- Others identify the individual as a member.
- Gang tattoos.
- Use of hand signs.
- Gang colors or clothing with gang names.
- Family members or relatives are members.
- Police, probation, court, or school records indicate the individual is a gang member.

Graffiti- “Newspaper of the Streets”



- Advertises Existence
- Marks Territory
- Communicates Threats
- Identifies Members with “Roster” or “Roll Call”
- Unique Techniques: BK, CK, write rival’s name upside down, cross out rival.



Graffiti Exists Across Virginia



- From our rural counties, cities, and towns...



Pittsylvania County

BRISTOL



COEBURN



GALAX



HARRISONBURG



RADFORD



RICHMOND



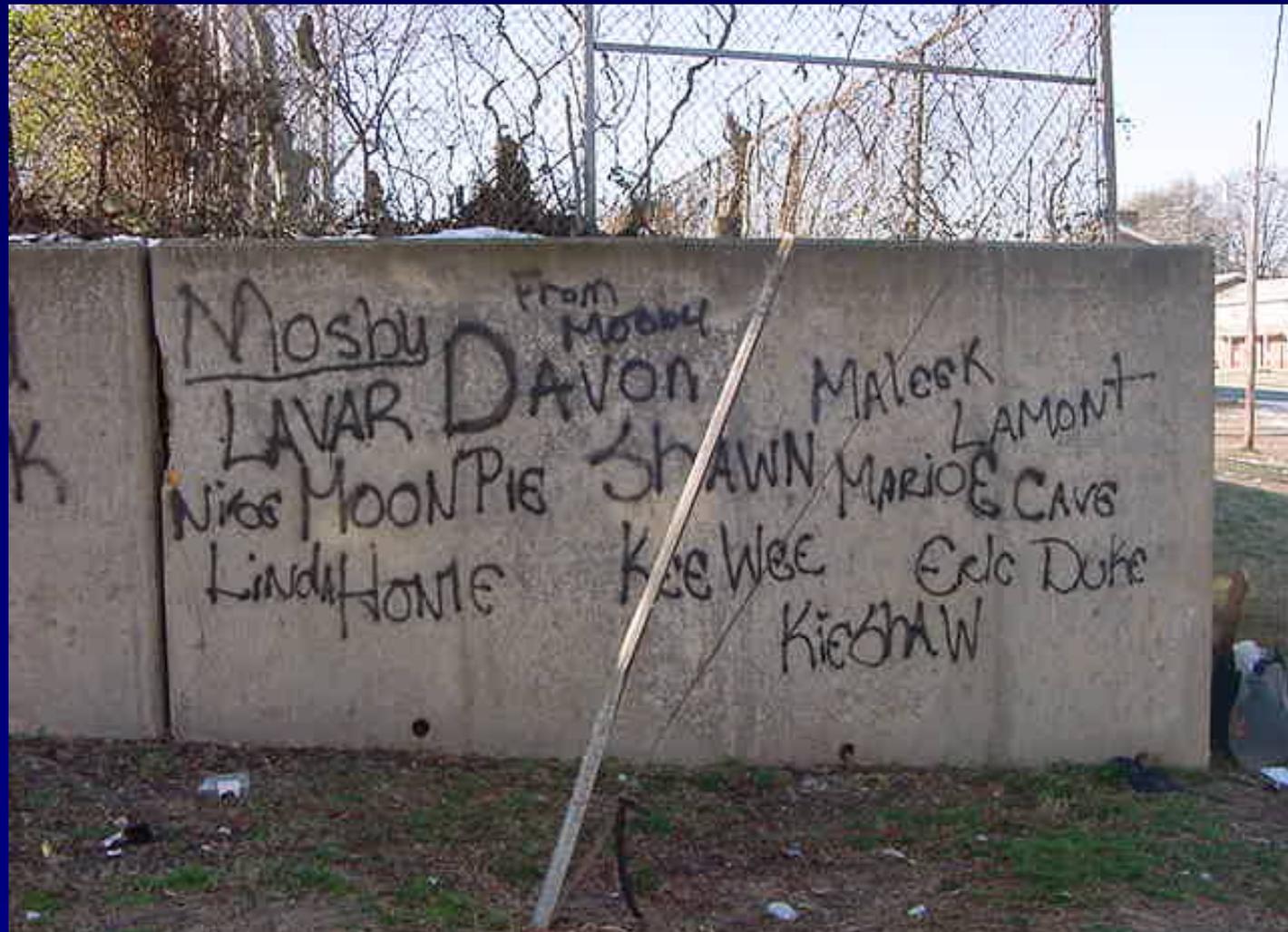
SPOTSYLVANIA



STAUNTON



“Roll Call” Graffiti



Tagger Graffiti



Children Know About Gangs



Examples of what appear to be young children copying gang graffiti



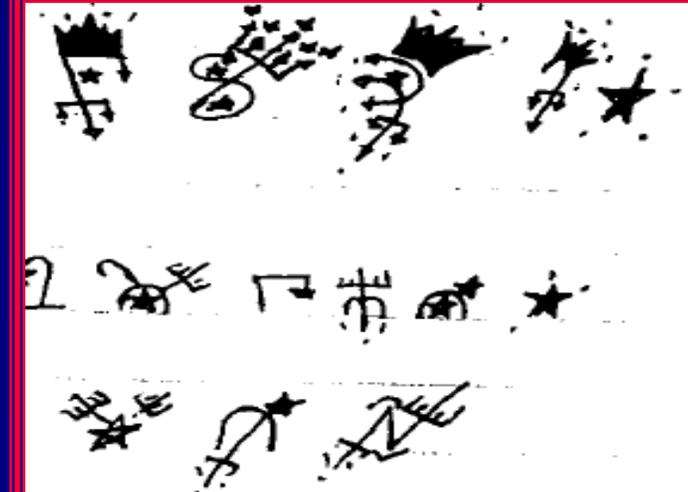


“Gang Knowledge”

- Part of the gang lifestyle includes elaborate “rules” used in their writing. Look for these clues in identifying at risk youth.

1) 50/53/52/44/23/35/40/41/45/5/5/
2) 50/23/27/34/8/8/15/16/61/56/60/29/44/

1) b
2) B
3) ↓ C
4) ↓ Bpt staff
5) Spt scepter
6) v L
7) ↓ Bpt crown
8) Folk killer
9) Crip killer



Part III



Safety Issues for E.M.S.





Remember Scene Safety

- What to look for when deciding – “Is the scene secure?”
- Location – Gang Turf???? Look for Graffiti, “Roll Calls,” People in the crowd
- Positioning of Ambulance
- Backup?





Tattoos



- Remember identifiers in tattoos
- Remember to distinguish “gang” vs. other
- Gang Tattoos often reflect crimes committed by wearer (187, teardrop, etc.)

Weapons



- Remember, many gang members will be armed
- Guns, knives, razor blades are common weapons
- Often the “weapon” will be concealed
- Beware of others with weapons



Observations while Treating on Scene



- Hand signs
- Phrases
- Practice “Contact Cover” – never get tunnel vision on patient
- Do not delay moving patient to the Unit – your safe zone

Any Questions?



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