Street gangs in the greater Holland area

The "$64,000 Question" in the minds and on the tongues of many concerned citizens, officials and the news media in the greater Holland area for the past few years has been, "Do we have street gangs in our area, and if we do, does a public admission cause to give validity to and strengthen the status of these gangs?"

Yes, we do have gangs in the greater Holland area. But, along with the admission of that fact is the need to define and categorize the true scope and nature of this problem.

It can be stated that based upon measurement criteria established thru research in various communities throughout the country that our community is in many ways not so very different from many other communities. But at the same time we can also state very emphatically that our community is different in that we have the desire, motivation, and ability to make positive change and address the gang issues facing us at this time.

In order to confirm the scope of the problem facing our community it is first important to recognize and define some of the constituent parts of the "gang" phenomena.

I. What is a "gang"
   A. There are almost as many definitions of the word "gang" as there are gangs, although most research agrees on a basic definition that includes the following concepts:
      1. two or more people who form an allegiance for a common purpose
      2. Identifies with or claims a territory (either a geographical location or scope of crime
      3. Engages individually or collectively in violence and/or other criminal activity

II. How are gangs recognized?
   A. Clothing
      manner worn, colors, logos
   B. Colors
      predominant colors include blue/black (Black Gangster Disciples, Crips, local CWA-Crips with an Attitude, TRG Tiny Rascal Gangsters); red/black (Vice Lords, Bloods), and gold/black (Latin Kings)
   C. Emblems
      six point star (Disciples), five point star (Vice Lords), and three to five point crown (Latin Kings)
   D. Graffiti
      marking of "territory", showing disrespect for rival gangs by inverting their imagery
   E. Jewelry
      gang insignias displayed on earrings, pendants pins, rings
F. Hand signs
   used to identify fellow gang members and also to intimidate rivals

G. Photos
   gang members often pose for photos while holding prized gang weapons
   and throwing gang signs

H. Territory
   turf is often marked with gang graffiti

I. Vocabulary
   "gangbanger", "Homeboy" or "Homie", etc.

III. Who is the gang member? (information from Youth Gang Suppression and
     Intervention Program authored by School of Social Service Administration; University
     of Chicago in cooperation with Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention;
     U.S. Dept. of Justice. Grant No. 90-D-CX-K001)
   A. range of types of youth:
      1. some conform to conventional norms
      2. most committed in varying degrees to a range of criminal behavior
      3. research data shows indicates gang members generally (but not
         uniformly) more serious and frequent offenders and more likely to
         become career criminals than non-gang delinquents
   B. position or role of gang member is time limited; range of 14-24 yrs.

IV. Why is a person a "gang member"?
   A. Most researchers agree that youth who willingly join gangs do so in an attempt
      to fulfill needs not satisfied in other aspects of life. These needs may be a sense
      of belonging, nurturing, economic opportunity. Yet this listing does not include
      one other very real need--excitement.
   B. We live in a world which displays expressive brutality in many formats; TV,
      film, comic books, music

V. How do we classify the nature and scope of the gang problem?
   A. growth and spread of gang problem; two-fold categorization of the nature and
      scope has arisen; requiring distinctive responses
   B. Chronic Problem
      1. long term violence and crises; over decades
      2. usually impoverished ghettos, established transitional areas or ports of
         entry, or inner cities
   C. Emerging Problem
      1. occasional gang violence or drug trafficking which began over the past
         ten years
      2. may be traced to newcomers from problem cities or contexts
3. youth gangs tend to be not well organized and most often evolve out of delinquent groups and changing social and economic situations within these cities or contexts.
VI. Is there a larger menace than any "gang"?

A. Dr. Carl S. Taylor; Professor, Department of Family and Child Ecology at MI State University in The Flint Journal "Viewpoint" June 26, 1994

B. "has reached the conclusion that more menacing than any gang is the mind set what is termed a "gangster mentality".

C. " It is the process in which many youngsters transform their outlook on life and come to believe that being soft, caring about others or doing things that respectable citizens do is not the "G" way".

D. This "gangster mentality" description reminds us that efforts made to address that "gang" problem must be viewed as a people issue equally as much as a group phenomenon.

VII. What are the major gang groups that exist?

A. People Nation (Bloods)
   1. Pitch fork pointed down
   2. Red colors (primary)
   3. Clothes to the left
   4. Five pointed stars and crowns

B. Folk Nation
   1. Pitch fork pointed up
   2. Blue colors (primary)
   3. Clothes to the right
   4. Three or six pointed crowns
   5. Six pointed star

C. Latin Kings
   1. Usually more closely aligned with the People Nation
   2. Pitch fork down
   3. Gold/Black colors
   4. extremely vindictive, rigid code of machoism
   5. Violence often used as gang initiation rite as well as used for code violation enforcement
   6. intensely loyal
   7. three or five point crown
   8. represent to the left

D. Asian Gangs
   1. very secretive as a group
   2. sometimes aligns with the Folk Nation
   3. often the most ruthless and violent
   4. very mobile from city to city; using safe houses
   5. home invasions with-in own group
   6. protection rackets
   7. illegal gambling
VIII. What are the major gang groups in the Holland area?
   A. Crips; CWA (Crips with an attitude)
      TRG (Tiny Rascal Gangsters) ((TRG Jr.s.)
      EFCC
      Gangster Disciples- GD; Black GD,
         1. Aligned with the Folk Nation
         2. colors- Blue
         3. members mostly from Asian countries (some white members)
   C. Latin Kings Nation,
      Latin Family
      La Familia,
      Latin Alliance,
      Vice Lords
         1. mostly Hispanic; Latin Kings very restrictive-Hispanic only
         2. colors- gold/black
         3. three to five point crown
         4. aligned with the People Nation

IX. What crimes do they commit?
   A. Property Crimes (MDP, Graffiti, etc.)
   B. Assaultive Crimes (with and without weapons)
   C. Robberies (Home invasions)
Folks

Caps: Right
Arms: Left out right
How say: Pitchfork up
Guy say: "All is one"
Colors: Blue, Black, Blue, White
Signs at Duespots: upside down or backwards

People

Caps: Left
Arm: Rt over Lf
Hands: Tintolaghind
Guy say: "ALL is well"
Colors: Red + Black
Gold + Black

CWA
Exotic Foreign Cession Crew
TRC
Junior Crews
G - D
B1K - G - D
Underground Klan

- Latin Kings - LKN
- Latin Family - LF
- Latin Alliance - LA
- Vice Lords - VL

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