

# Combating gangs in the inner cities

Sociology



Los Angeles Gang Problem The Los Angeles originated from the Spanish and it means The Angels. This city is one of the most populous cities in the United States. Due to its large population it has attracted a variety of investment opportunities in entertainment, media, and fashion industries. Los Angeles boasts of some of the important landmarks in the United States like the Hollywood Sign, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Dodger Stadium, the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels and so on. It accommodates people from different races and ethnicity from different countries all over the world. Its high population has led to the growth of street gangs. Gang problem in Los Angeles has been a threat to the authorities as it has led to the increase of organized crime in the city. According to the United States Census of 2010, Los Angeles has a population of 3, 792, 621 people with a population density of 7, 544. 6 people per square mile. The majority of its people are between the ages of 18 to 44 years which is referred to as the age of the youth. 34. 1 years is the median age. There have been an estimated number of 450 gangs with a membership of 45, 000 members. Narcotics trade has been the major contributor to the spread of gangs due to its lucrative market. Different gangs identify their members through graffiti, tattoos, piercings, rings, choice and color of clothing, secret codes and sign to name a few ( Huff 1990). Gang problem in LA has led to gang killings due to drug wars, revenge, fighting over the control of certain areas. Most of the gang members are the youth who are organized in cohesive units led by powerful gang leaders. The youth join gangs to make money by selling drugs and committing criminal activities funded by their gang leaders or Bosses. Rivalry of the different gangs has led to an increase of illegal arms on the streets to which leads to the rampant shootings. This has created a headache for the <https://assignbuster.com/combating-gangs-in-the-inner-cities/>

law enforcement officers. Since gang problem is a community problem there have been measures to help deal with the problem like through the use of schools, community-based organizations, police, and public health officials in an effort to prevent and intervene the gang problem ( Huff 1990). Gang problem in Los Angeles has led to the spread of gangs to other parts of the United States. Gangs migrate to other parts of the U. S. in an effort to expand their territory. Law enforcement officers have like the District Attorney's Office has been at the forefront to suppress, prevent and intervene into the gang problem. This has been done through strict prosecutions of criminal gang activities. This has been done by following Penal Code Section 186. 20, which is the Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act which gives the attorneys powers to enhance penalties and strict sentences to gang members. Prosecution of gang members faces difficulties as most of the witnesses are afraid to be a witness against a gang member for fear of revenge attacks by other gang members. This makes witnesses not to cooperate fully with the prosecution. To ensure the safety of the witnesses, the attorneys ensure that the witnesses are relocated to a safer environment (Arthur & Edsel 1992). There have been programs put in place to fight gang activities in Los Angeles and they include: Community Law Enforcement and Recovery program which uses a collaborative effort to fight gang activities, the Unsolved Homicide Team which uses detectives in the investigations and prosecutions of unsolved gang activities and the Gang Risk Intervention Program. To prevent and intervene on the gang problem one has to understand the causes of gang activity. Some of the causes are: family heritage where a family has a history of involvement with gangs, defense mechanism for failure at school, gangs provide a sense of belonging

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and companionship, lack of alternative means to earn money, looking for safety, peer pressure and a way to gain respect from the community ( Arthur & Edsel 1992). An understanding of the causes of gang involvement will make it easy for prevention and intervention programs to be successfully implemented. In schools, they can focus on ways to reducing gang activities by providing parents and students with information on gang activities.

Teachers can provide students with information on drugs by providing them with an alternative to the use of drugs. This can be done by engaging them in activities that will boost their self-esteem and help them to overcome the influence of peer pressure. Learning institutions and parents can adapt the Jeopardy Program which seeks to reduce the involvement in gang activities by resolving conflicts and improving life-affirming skills. The community can help reduce gang activities by collaborative with law enforcement officers to suppress the gangs. Community outreach programs can be used to help in resolving conflicts that help the youth to stop using drugs and consequently stop their involvement with gangs. Intervention in gang involvement can be done through positive mentorship where youths who have not joined gangs are used as role models to convince their peers to stop their involvement with gangs. It has been found that people of the same age are likely to listen to their age mates as they relate to each other much easier. In summary, the most effective way to deal with the reduction of gang activities in Los Angeles is to deal with the powerful gang leaders and use effective measures to fight the lucrative trade of narcotics. The Government should seek to provide job opportunities for the youth to prevent them from being lured into gangs. References Huff, C. R. (1990). *Gangs in America*. New York: Sage

Publications. Arthur, R., and Edsel E. (1992). Gangs and Schools. New York: LP Learning Publications, Inc.