

Urban gangs



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The existence of gangs in the United States of America is believed to start after the Mexican revolution in 1813. Initially, the gangs began with small member groupings which got used to hanging out and partying together. However, in the 1950s this trend changed. The activities of the gangs began evolving with each passing time. The gangs started acquiring lethal weapons and engaging in drugs trafficking. This led to gangs being characterized by the violent behaviours. The most common gangs in the United States came up in the 1950s. It is during this time that the West Side Story Era came to the lime light. This period was characterised by terror being inflicted onto the streets by the gang members; the gangs became steadily increasing (Bartollas & Miller, 2011).

Changes have been taking place in the gangs found in United States of America. The so called evolution of the gangs can be observed. Gangs were initially formed by youths who went to school and played together within the same neighbourhood. These youths developed a sense of identity and formed their own closely-knit groups. The activities, the gangs were involved in, were constantly shifted with time. Previously the gangs were hanging out and spending most of their time partying. This trend was changed, and most of the gangs got involved in criminal activities, the use of addictive substances or drugs. The gangs carried out the trafficking of illegal drugs and substances in the urban communities. The gangs became synonymous with inflicting terror to the neighbourhoods in which the gangs existed. These gangs carried out muggings, robberies, and extortion. The social composition of these gangs has also undergone a transformation. More adults form the majority of the composition in the gangs. This is because the

youths who entered into the gangs did not leave the same neighbourhood, and as a result, they became adult members of the gang. Therefore, the youths who joined the gangs just added to the previously existing gang population (Bartollas & Miller, 2011).

There are three types of gangs in United States of America. The types of gangs were based on their motives in the society and the day-to-day activities that the gangs were engaging in. This includes the territorial, scavenger, and corporate gangs. Just like many organisation, the gangs too had leadership structures put in place. The establishment of leadership structures meant that the sustenance of the gangs is enhanced. These gangs to provide leadership adopted various models. Most of the gangs either adopted the horizontal, vertical or influential structures of leadership. The new members of the gangs are recruited after initiation rites are performed. The rites of passage of an individual varied in accordance with sex and family member involvement in the gang (Bartollas & Miller, 2011).

The gangs have been steadily increasing in number over time. The increase is attributed to changes in the social and the political climates in the United States of America. These changes brought about the variations in their livelihood. Those who could not cope with the changes resorted to join the gangs in order to make ends meet. It is for this reason that the numbers of those who joined the gangs kept on rising with time. Migration also contributes to the rising number of gang members from larger cities and suburban counties (Bartollas & Miller, 2011).

In conclusion, the growth of gangs in the United States can be suppressed if the political and social changes are taken into account. The youths need to be constantly engaged in constructive activities such as learning to prevent them from being idle.