



INTRODUCTION TO GANGS

Sacramento Sheriff's Department Gang Unit

The gang and drug problem has changed dramatically in the Sacramento area during the past few years. Over 30 street gangs claiming more than 1,700 members are known to law enforcement officials here. The proliferation of gang activity has caused a related increase in the number of crimes and gang-related violence. Nearly half the homicides can now be ascribed to gang rivalry and drug trafficking.

Recently, growing numbers of black street gang members from southern California and the Bay Area have located in the Sacramento Valley, lured by enormous profits to be made from the sales of rock cocaine. This influx of gang members from other parts of California has changed the character of the gang and drug problem here. Previously, more than half the gang activity involved Hispanics, long-time members of the gang scene in Sacramento. Presently, however, more than 70 percent of the gang activity can be traced to black street gangs. Because of the lucrative profits to be made in illegal drug sales, Hispanics have begun forming associations with the black gangs.

There is one key factor causing the movement of the black street gangs from Southern California to Sacramento and its surrounding areas: profit margin from the sales of crack. It is estimated that for as little as \$300 a Los Angeles based gang member can purchase an ounce of rock cocaine. For the price of a tank of gas or a plane ticket that same ounce of rock cocaine can be sold here in Sacramento for \$2800 or more.

Law enforcement officials have attempted to combat this situation with various prevention and enforcement efforts. The Sacramento Police Department has combined their gang and

narcotics teams into one unit in an attempt to target gangs involved in drug sales, and additionally have established a "buy/bust" operation. The Sacramento Sheriff's Department Special Investigations Unit coordinates closely with the Probation Department and District Attorney's Office in targeting known drug offenders and gang members. Co-operative efforts such as these will assist

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in focusing public awareness on the magnitude of the drug and gang problems in the Sacramento area. ✪

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