



**WESTERN STATES  
INFORMATION NETWORK®**

**GROUP OF INTEREST:**

**THE  
JUGGALOS**



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# **THE JUGGALOS**

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## JUGGALOS: AN OVERVIEW

In the early 1990s, a subculture group, having grown up around the rap/horror core group the Insane Clown Posse (*ICP*), started surfacing. The fan base known as the Juggalos - Juggalettees for the female members of the group - came to see themselves as a family consisting of individuals who felt they were outcasts rejected by society. What started out as a group known for their unique interests in music, lifestyle, clothing, and slang, has gradually become a group commonly associated with acts of violence and gang activity including vandalism, arson, assault, and murder, among others. The Juggalos originated from the greater Detroit, Michigan area, and have expanded their numbers as well as their criminal reputation nationwide. Though the Juggalos are not as large or as well-known as many other street gangs, they are not small. They are believed to have members in the thousands.



*ICP* consisted of two rappers who go by the names Violent J and Shaggy 2 Dope (pictured). The group formed in the late 1980s, and at that time, *ICP* stood for *Inner City Posse*. Early on, the duo had released a couple albums, but was still virtually unknown. They gained little recognition nationally with the release of their album *Dog Beats* in 1991. Soon afterward, Violent J claimed to have dreamt of a clown, a carnival spirit, and six joker cards called the “Dark Carnival.” *ICP* decided to go into a different direction marking the beginning of *Insane Clown Posse*. They went on to release several albums warning the world of impending doom. *ICP*, still in existence today, has never been able to grab the attention of mainstream society. Due to their extremely violent and vulgar lyrics, and quite possibly their unusual beliefs, media outlets such as radio and MTV refuse to play their music. In spite of this, they have continued to record music and sell records thanks in large part to their loyal fan base.

The Juggalos, the name given to them by *ICP* meaning follower of the “Dark Carnival,” claim to not preach violence. *Insane Clown Posse* as well as their record label *Psychopathic Records* have openly professed that they do not condone violence, especially violence committed by Juggalos. However, the music that *ICP* releases contradicts their stated distaste for violence. The following lyrics were taken from an *ICP* song:

### My Axe

**My axe is my buddy; I bring him when I walk  
Me and my axe will leave your head outlined in chalk  
My axe is my buddy, he always makes me laugh  
Me and my axe cut bigot spinal cords in half**

*Psychopathic Records* holds an annual four-day event, acclaimed by Juggalos, known as the “The Gathering.” This is where Juggalos unite and participate in wrestling matches, contests, and autograph sessions coinciding with concert performances by *ICP* along with similar, lesser known, but just as sadistic and vulgar music groups such as *Twiztid*, *Psychopathic Rydas*, and *Dark Lotus*. Each group claims to preach the teachings of the “Dark Carnival.” Although they claim the “Dark Carnival” as their God and believe in the teachings, the Juggalos are not a religious group. According to Detective Burk Stearns of the Rancho Cordova Police Department in Rancho Cordova, California, “They are more cultish than religious.” He compares them to the followers of other popular but controversial artists of their time such as the *Grateful Dead* and *Marilyn Manson*. Having interviewed 15 to 20 Juggalos in the Sacramento County, California area, Detective Stearns estimates there to be approximately 100 Juggalos in and around Sacramento. Based on what he has observed, they tend to be mainly adolescents who spend their time in pool halls and bars. They do commit crimes in Sacramento, but they do not claim to be a gang nor do they claim any particular territory. His encounters are usually drug related. Drugs such as methamphetamine, hallucinogens, and marijuana tend to be the most popular drugs used among Juggalos.



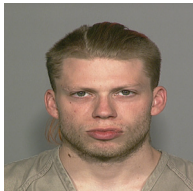
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Another criminal act committed by Juggalos in Sacramento is arson. In February 2007, four Sacramento County teenagers, who told investigators they were Juggalos, were suspected of setting more than 20 fires in the region, resulting in more than \$1 million in damages. These suspects were arrested and charged with arson. They also faced the gang enhancement charge, but that charge was ultimately dropped. Juggalos are not a validated gang in Sacramento. Some California law enforcement agencies believe the group could be validated in the near future because they fit the criteria. There are three or more members, and can be identified by tattoos, clothes, and make-up. There are also *ICP* graffiti and hand signs. The following is a sample of other recent crimes committed across the country by Juggalos:

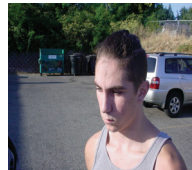
- On February 2, 2006, Jacob Robida (pictured right), an 18-year-old Massachusetts-born Juggalo with Neo-Nazism interests, engaged in a series of hatchet attacks beginning at a gay bar 50 miles south of Boston, and ending in a shooting spree which left three dead, including him, his female companion, and a Gassville, Arkansas police officer, James Sell of the Gassville Police Department.



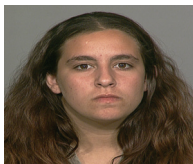
- Between June 18 and June 20, 2006, attacks leaving nearly two dozen injured were investigated by Lakewood Police Department of Lakewood, Washington. The group, armed with a machete, attacked, robbed, and threatened to decapitate visitors at the Fort Steilacoom Park in Tacoma, Washington, while shouting "Woop! Woop! Juggalo!" There were seven defendants (pictured below). All were self-identified, self-admitted Juggalos.



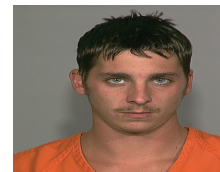
Daniel "DJ Barnum, 22, pled guilty to robbery and sentenced to six years, five months in prison.



Ryder Fox Dowling, 17, pled guilty to robbery and assault. He was sentenced to two years and seven months in prison.



Crystal Hilliard, 21, pled guilty to rendering criminal assistance and sentenced to 90 days in jail.



Joel Hradecky, 23, pled guilty to robbery and sentenced to three years, five months in prison.



Joshua Kuhr-Jarman, 20, pled guilty to robbery and assault and sentenced to 10 years, six months in prison.



Patrick Valenzuela, 20, pled guilty to robbery and assault and sentenced to seven years, eight months in prison.



Anthony Pierce pled out to 13 years on two counts of first-degree robbery and two counts of second-degree assault.

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- In February 2007, Lafayette, Colorado teenager Bryan Grove, who identified himself as a Juggalo, stabbed his girlfriend's mother to death. Grove, his girlfriend Tess Damm, also a Juggalette, and two of their friends, Jared Smith and Jared Guy, were arrested in connection with the murder.



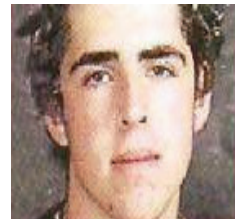
**Bryan Grove, 18, pled guilty in November 2007 to a charge of second-degree murder receiving a 40-year term, but he will be eligible for parole after 75 percent of his sentence has been served.**



**Tess Damm, 16, pled guilty as a juvenile to second-degree murder, and as an adult to solicitation to commit second-degree murder. She was sentenced to 23 years in prison.**



**Jared Guy, 19, pled guilty to felony tampering. He was sentenced to work release, electronic home monitoring and probation.**



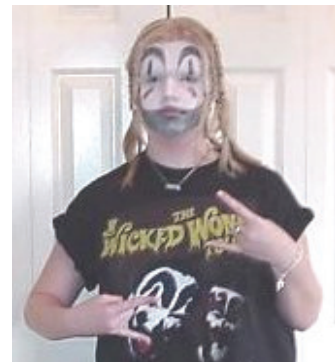
**Jared Smith, 17, pled guilty to juvenile charge of accessory. He will serve a two-year sentence in juvenile prison.**

### Juggalos: Gang or Cult?

Are the Juggalos a true gang as defined by law? According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), a gang is essentially a criminal enterprise having an organizational structure, acting as a continuing criminal conspiracy which employs violence and any other criminal activity to sustain the enterprise. The California Department of Justice defines a gang as, "Any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having as one of its primary activities the commission of one or more of the criminal acts enumerated in paragraphs (1) to (25), inclusive, of subdivision (e), having a common name or common identifying sign or symbol, and whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal gang activity."

The Juggalos as a whole are a subculture group, but within that subculture are several subsets. Because of this division, it is very difficult to validate the Juggalos as a true gang. Difficulty in validating the Juggalos as a gang is similar to the difficulty in validating other subculture groups as gangs, such as motorcycle clubs. Not all motorcycle clubs are gangs, but within the motorcycle club subculture exist outlaw motorcycle gangs such as the Hells Angels, Mongols, Bandidos, etc.

Those who contend that the Juggalos are a gang argue that the Juggalos' method for identifying themselves is similar to that of street gangs. They wear distinct clothing, tattoos, weaponry, and speak a distinct language. Juggalos' colors include red, black, green, and gray. They are evident in all types of clothing and in bandanas worn. Juggalos will wear *ICP* regalia as well as the Hatchet Gear brand clothing (pictured right) which is available at numerous retailers and on the internet. Most have tattoos of clowns similar to that of *ICP*'s CD covers. Clown stickers can also be found on their vehicles. The stickers are not difficult to spot due to their uniqueness in bright colors, psychotic and



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menacing appearances, and they are usually seen in a running motion while holding a hatchet (see page 6). The hatchet man is the most common symbol, because it is the logo for *Psychopathic Records*. A hatchet(s) can often be found on Juggalos' members, and is their weapon of choice. They also wear dark clothing, but occasionally will don bright-colored clown clothing, and can sometimes be noticed wearing black and white makeup (pictured below). They like to draw attention to themselves. They consist of predominantly Caucasian members ranging in age from early-teens to late-twenties. Many members are involved in criminal activity; however, these tend to be in their late teens to early twenties.



Juggalos can also be identified by the words they say and by the way they speak to one another. "Woop! Woop! Juggalo!" and "What up Ninja?" are common greetings among Juggalos. Ninja is another name for Juggalo. "Down with the clown," "runnin' with the hatchet," "family," or a "hatchet rider" are phrases that indicate Juggalos affiliation. A leader among Juggalos may be called a "Don" (a la Don Corleone). Juggalos may indicate motive to commit criminal activity by using the above language. The motive may be the Juggalo lifestyle itself.

Nevertheless, many regions of the country still do not regard the Juggalos as a gang. One reason for this is the fact that Juggalos are not collectively involved in crime, and claim no particular territory. This is generally the case, but there are places where Juggalo sets have shown this type of behavior as in the example below. This photograph, taken in 2006, depicts graffiti on a Tacoma, Washington area residence by a Juggalo set known as the "Tak Town Klownz." The Tacoma, Washington area code "253" is also incorporated.



As previously mentioned, generally Juggalos' members do not consider themselves to be gang members. This in and of itself is atypical gangster behavior. A gang member usually wants others to know he/she is a gang member. They also do not become members by being "jumped in" like typical street gangs. Other than having a strong allegiance to ICP, a member simply must claim to be a Juggalo. Although being "jumped in" does not validate gangs, it is a common gang custom. They also do not have a distinct rival such as that of the Crips and the Bloods. In some areas of the country, however, Juggalos have been known to form allegiances with certain street gangs. Their allegiances, however, appear to vary from place to place. There are also documented recent problems in the Tacoma area where Juggalos have clashed with members of the Crips and Bloods. Many members have criminal histories, but they claim as a group to not support violence. The following is an excerpt taken from a Juggalos website ([www.whatisajuggalo.com](http://www.whatisajuggalo.com)):

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**“A Juggalo is one who lives their life by the hatchet. In other words, they believe in the true meaning behind ICP’s songs, and try to live by J and Shaggy’s preachings. Juggaloism is a movement that has been thriving all over the world for the past 10 years as both a music subculture and as a spiritual philosophy, known as the Dark Carnival. Juggalos are basically outcasts from all walks of life who were brought together and united by the group Insane Clown Posse, and created a world amongst themselves free of hate, prejudice, racism, sexism, and celebrated the differences that drive many in mainstream America apart from each other. Culturally diverse people who embrace this movement see others for who they are instead of what clothes they wear, their social class, etc., and love each other as much as or even more so than normal people love their immediate families.”**

This excerpt may suggest that the Juggalos are more like a cult than a gang. Cults, by definition, are cohesive social groups whose beliefs and/or social practices are deemed by the dominant culture as outside mainstream. In other words, a cult is a group of individuals with an esoteric interest, obsessive devotion or veneration towards someone or something that is largely regarded as extremely unusual. Their beliefs are generally perceived as somewhat religious, although their belief system is not considered a religion by mainstream society.

Detective Jeff Paynter and his partner Les Bunton, of the Lakewood Police Department in Lakewood, Washington, worked together on the Fort Steilacoom Park case where Juggalos robbed and assaulted nearly two dozen people. Detective Paynter has extensive knowledge of the Juggalos, and has given several presentations to law enforcement agencies informing them about the Juggalos and warning them of the potential Juggalos’ threat. He is very familiar with their beliefs, and where their beliefs stem from. The following information was taken from his presentation:

### Insane Clown Posse

After years of the hard life that went along with being in a street gang, Violent J had this brainstorm, which he claims had come to him in a vivid dream. The meaning of the Dark Carnival and the six separate Joker’s Cards is explained in his book, Behind the Paint.

Shaggy 2 Dope and Violent J were supposedly visited by the Dark Carnival, and now they send its message.

The Joker’s Cards consist of the Carnival of Carnage, the Ringmaster, the Riddle Box, the Great Milenko, the Amazing Jeckel Brothers, and the Wraith.



“Hatchet Man” Stickers



# The Dark Carnival

(Extracted from [www.whatisajuggalo.com](http://www.whatisajuggalo.com))



The Carnival of Carnage

This 1st of the joker's card and the first album featuring the Insane Clown Posse (formerly the Inner City Posse) tells of the Carnival that comes to drag you to heaven or hell.



The Ringmaster

Promotes gang harmony, and features claws that represent rival gang signs of forks up and forks down. In other words, all kinds can have clown love.



The Riddle Box

Represents the vision many see when they die. When you turn the crank, what comes out determines if you go to Heaven or Hell.



The Great Milenko

The master of illusion, Milenko has the ability to cast aside people's self-delusions, so they can see what they truly are. For most, this is a hideous, horrible reflection of their evil souls.



The Amazing Jeckel Brothers (Jake & Jack)

The Amazing Jeckel Brothers are Jake and Jack Jeckel. Jake is good, and cares for the well-being of people, while Jack is sinister and evil. When you die these two spirits juggle your sins. For each sin you committed in your life a ball is added to their juggling act, making it harder for them to perform. If they drop a ball you go to Hell, if not, you will enter into Shangri-La. To make matters worse, Jack is trying to mess Jake up, just for the fun of it.



The Wraith

Simple and blunt, the Wraith is just another name for death. The one who comes for you at death. This card is unveiled in two albums; Shangri-La and Hell's Pit. Each album dedicates to the rewards or punishments in store for those who have aligned their lives for either Heaven or Hell.



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The central message of the Juggalo subculture, internet community, and music seems to be that, as outcasts, they are justified in committing acts of violence against their perceived tormentors. Further, if a Juggalo needs help, the family is expected to assist no matter what the consequences are. Many Juggalos carry hatchets, knives and firearms as part of the "running with the hatchet" life philosophy. The quasi-religious nature of the "Dark Carnival" openly hints at a heaven or paradise that may be attained by "righteous" Juggalos who adhere to the rules. This attitude parallels that of some extremist groups. The behavior of Jacob Robida, the individuals in Fort Steilacoom Park, and the four teenagers in Boulder, Colorado displayed extremely violent behavior which may be attributed to this attitude. Several schools are already prohibiting students from attending school wearing ICP apparel, because of violence that had been committed by Juggalos at their school. The level of violence exhibited by Juggalos has escalated over recent years, and criminal behavior among them is likely to not only continue, but to increase.

Most in law enforcement familiar with the Juggalos, including Detective Stearns and Detective Paynter, would agree that the Juggalos are not just a gang, nor are they just a cult. They possess characteristics of both, but conceptually, they would approach Juggalos members in the same manner they would approach any street gang. Though there is dissension among many in law enforcement on whether or not Juggalos are truly a street gang, most agree that the Juggalos consist of troubled youths who are without proper guidance, and listen heavily to music that glorifies violence among other improprieties. Many would also agree that this group is up and coming, their popularity is growing rapidly across the country, and officers need to be aware of the potential danger that many of the Juggalos are capable of. Detective Paynter advises law enforcement agencies to follow appropriate guidelines for gathering intelligence on Juggalo sets just as an agency would with other gangs and extremist groups. He also urges agencies to consider Juggalos' preference for carrying hand weapons as well as firearms when conducting officer training. Detective Paynter sees the Juggalos movement evolving into a threat as it draws in members of "the bottom 1%." The religious ideology combined with the gangster/thug persona adopted by many Juggalos has spawned individuals and groups capable of extreme violence. Therefore, regardless of whether they are truly a gang, a cult, neither, or both, officers must approach persons who could be identified as Juggalos with the appropriate safety precautions.



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