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Skinhead and Other White Supremacist Gangs

Understanding the markings and motivations of white supremacist gangs.

July 13, 2007 | by Richard Valdemar

When I make any gang presentation I usually set the fundamentals down first. After giving the definition of a criminal gang, the question most asked is, How do gangs begin?

White supremacist gangs began with young people who perceived themselves as outsiders suffering from injustice, just like every gang.

No gang began because a group of well adjusted teens were attempting to conquer the underground world to become "Godfathers." The birth of most gangs is a subtle shift from natural small group formations, to defensive groups, to pack mentality predators. But the beginnings are always the same.

"The breeding ground for all gangs begins with an excluded group who feels victimized by poverty, the establishment, or some other real or imagined injustice. It is fed by an anti-establishment culture of drugs, crime, hate, and racial separatism." This applies to the long established African American and Hispanic gangs and the newer groups like the "Trench Coat Mafia" of Columbine. It also applies to the non-traditional or alternative gangs like Skinheads.

For the 1,000 white gang members in the 20 white Los Angeles gangs and the over 40,000 white prisoners in the California prison system, no one group is more excluded by the system than whites. They strongly feel that the government—that their white forefathers established, fought, and died for—today gives preferential treatment to minorities and illegal aliens. The system seems to tolerate Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American racists and radicals but loves to hate the Whites and especially the Nazis. Listen to the rhetoric and emotion so well depicted in the movie "American History X" and you'll get a feel for these groups' beliefs.

The same feelings spawned the Punk and Skinhead movements in England in the 1960s. They were a rebellion against the proper British establishment and designed to shock and offend the older generation. They were a rejection of corporate mass produced music. Groups of white blue collar youths formed in opposition to the influx of immigrants into the old neighborhoods. The "Mods" fought with Jamaican "Rude Boys" at scooter (motorcycle) rallies and football (soccer) games.

These early forefathers of the Skinheads often spoke out against drugs. They blamed the minorities for spreading drugs in their neighborhoods. They hung out at pubs and drank beer and beat up Gays and Asians. They listened to Ska and Reggae rhymes mixed with Punk and Alternative music. Musical writer Gary Bushell coined "Oi" as the name of this music style. In the early 1970s Skinheads shaved

their heads, wore swastikas, and separated from their Punk brothers. After all, what could offend and shock the older English generation more than their identification with the hated Nazis?

In the early 1970s the author of "In the Heat of the Night," John Ball, rode with me in my East L.A. gang unit. He said he was there to study and write about ELA gangs. He told me that he had recently returned from England where he had ridden with Scotland Yard and other British cops who were involved in combating Punk and Skinhead gangs. They had told him that the English gangs were imitating our Los Angeles gangs.

Like other Los Angeles gangs, Skinhead gangs cannot be lumped together in one homogenous style. SHARP Skinheads are "Skin Heads Against Racial Prejudice." They claim to be more of what those early English Skins were about. "Unity" is their logo and it can often be seen on their clothing or tattooed on their bodies along with the crossed out swastikas. But Sharps believe in the use of violence to settle disputes, drink lots of beer, and listen to the same Oi bands, although they may have mixed racial band members. Sharps traditionally war with the Nazi Skinheads.

Straightedge Skins are another form of Skinheads. Straights look like other Skins but do not advocate the use of alcohol, drugs, premarital sex, hate, or violence. However, they sometimes also beat up Nazi Skinheads. They often are identified by their use of the letter "X" on their person or clothing. This was originally a symbol marked prominently on the back of the right hand so the bartenders at clubs and raves would not serve alcohol to minors with this mark. It became the Straight Edge identity card. The more "X's the more extreme the Straightedger. "XXX" is the most extreme Straightedge Skinhead; very often this type of Skin is also a Vegan. They do not eat or utilize animals or animal products. These are the Skinheads who might be involved in bombing a McDonald's restaurant or the animal lab at the local university.

Most intimidating to most Americans are the Nazi Skinheads. Nazi Skins are the white backlash predicted by civil rights workers of the mid-sixties. Dressed in their Doc Martin Boots, plaid shirts, and work pants with matching suspenders (braces) and boot laces, they are a growing problem. White braces and laces mean white power. Yellow are for Sharps, and red for hardcore violent skinheads. Green laces and braces are for support of the Aryan Brotherhood. In the violent mix of the Mosh Pit they draw everyone's attention with their "Heil Hitler" salutes. They cover their bodies with Nazi and White Power tattoos. They have numerous Websites on the Internet, spreading their propaganda over cyber space.

Nazi Skinheads have formed alliances with the KKK, some Punk groups, European Nazis, and other white supremacists. Although official government sources continue to deny it, they are a real problem in all branches of the military. Remember, Navy Commander George Lincoln Rockwell founded the American Nazi Party and decorated Army Gulf War veteran Timothy McVeigh bombed the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. In January of 2004, the infamous Tom Metzger addressed the Skinheads gathered at the Phoenix Volksfront. "Don't operate like a battleship!" he shouted. "Operate like a Nazi submarine! Use your periscope! We have to infiltrate! Infiltrate the military! Infiltrate your local governments! Infiltrate your school board! Infiltrate law enforcement!"

When these white Skinheads and Punk gang members go to jail they fall under the authority of the prison gangs. These white kids are protected from the predatory minority prison gangs and security threat groups by members of the Nazi Lowriders (NLR) and the Aryan Brotherhood (AB or Brand). The AB and NLR recruit and brainwash these gang members to utilize them to continue their prison race wars and the control of narcotics trafficking inside and outside of prison. However, very often the

whites kill other whites. The real motivation of these groups in prison is not white supremacist ideology but financial profit and power through terrorism.

As a representative of the system that places them below the latest illegal immigrant, you are seen as the enemy. Their grievances have been ignored and their way of life threatened. There is a lot of angry young white kids out there tapping into the hate music and hate Websites and forming into self protection groups. Their "right back at you" attitude and willingness to fight for what they think is right can be dangerous. This is a prescription for further gang proliferation and increased violence.

When you see a Skinhead drop his braces off his shoulders, no matter what color those braces and laces are, he is telling you he is going to war. Don't get caught unprepared.