

Crip & Blood History

1970's

There have been many stories regarding the beginning and subsequent expansion of the Crip and Blood Gangs. We have tried to identify some of the most prevalent myths, and shed some factual information regarding the Crip and Blood Gangs as witnessed first hand.

Myth number 1:

- * "Crips" originally stood for "Community Resources for Independent People".
- * "Crips" evolved from the word "Crib".
- * "Crip" name started as a result of a newspaper (Los Angeles Sentinel 1972) article that accidentally described a Crib member, who had assaulted someone, as a Crip by mistake.

Truth:

The name "Crip" was short for "cripple". One of Raymond's sidekicks walked with a limp. It was originally thought that the individual who limped had been shot in the leg. A crime victim referred to their assailant (Raymond's group) as being a "crip", instead of a "cripple". It has been confirmed that Raymond's older brother, Reggie, was bow legged and had a bad ankle. His buddies would write "crip" on his Converse tennis shoes as a joke, demeaning his handicap. This was well before the name "Crip" became synonymous with the Crip gang name. This was verified by Raymond's younger brother (Derard Barton), and a neighbor with first hand knowledge who lived across the street from Raymond.** The name "Crip" was definitely derived from the word "cripple". This also explains why the original Crips utilized a cane, and walked with an exaggerated limp. The word "Crip" caught on, and stuck just like a lot of nicknames do. The "Crip" name was also given additional publicity as a result of a newspaper(s) account of the above described crime. Note: An original newspaper account, if there was one, had to have occurred in the 1971 time frame, as the Crip name was already wide spread by 1972. The 1972 article by the Sentinel correctly referred to the assailants as being Crips, because that was already their (Crips) established name".

Myth number 2:

The first Crip Gang started on the "Eastside". (referring to Eastside of the Harbor Frwy)

Truth:

The gang did start East of the Harbor Frwy., but the dividing line between the Eastside and the Westside, at that time, was Central Ave. An example would be the Kitchen Crips. The Kitchen Crip Gang was located directly east of Central. The Westside Kitchen was directly West of Central. In later years, as the Crip Gangs spread throughout Los Angeles, the Harbor Frwy. became the commonly accepted dividing line between the East and West side.

Myth number 3:

- * Raymond Washington's groups' original intent was to *"continue the revolutionary ideology of the 60's, and to act as community leaders and protectors of their local neighborhoods"*.
- * Raymond founded the organization in *"response to the increasing level of police harassment of the Black community"*.

Truth:

These statements are all romantic folklore with absolutely no substance. Raymond was just a troubled 15 year old kid who hung around other troubled 14 and 15 year old youths. Raymond had been kicked out of a number of schools, and had already been involved in the juvenile detention system. Raymond, at 15, did not have the maturity, or the vision to formulate these great ideological ideas and plans that some "social experts" espouse. Gregory Davis, who has also been identified as being another one of the original leaders was only 14 years old in 1969.

Myth number 4:

Raymond's Gang was called the Raymond Street Crips.

Truth:

The Raymond Street Crips were located well West and South of Raymond's home turf. Too far away to be called his gang. That gang probably didn't even start until after Raymond stopped Crippin'. The first Crip gang was simply called the Crips. When the gang expanded it became the Westside Crips. In later years this area became the East Coast Crips.

Myth number 5:

The original gang attire included a leather coat, patterned after the Panther party.

Truth:

The original gang attire included an ear ring in the left ear, kaki pants, suspenders hanging down, brim type of hat, cane, and Stacy Adams, "Old man comforts" shoes. Gregory Davis, aka Batman, was the poster child for this OG Crip look. *Note: Even then, not every Crip had this same look as some of the kids could not afford the clothes.* The leather coat look was temporary and short lived at best. The leather coat was supposed to be stolen, and was a demonstration of strength and power as it had to be taken from someone else. This didn't last long either, as there were not enough leather coats available to be stolen. The cane, the suspenders hanging down, and the exaggerated "limp" look lasted the longest. The blue rag was also an early identifier of Crip association.

Myth number 6:

The Piru Gang originally went by the name, Piru Crips.

Truth:

There is no evidence supporting this claim. Original Piru members have always denied any validity to this claim.

Myth number 7:

- * In 1972 there was only 18 Crip and Blood Gangs operating out of Los Angeles, Compton, and Inglewood. Two independent black gangs were firmly established in the South Central Los Angeles area. Six gangs had

territories in the unincorporated areas, e.g. Athens, Florence, and Willowbrook,

* Between 1973 and 1975 the Crips formed a Federation

Truth:

By the end of 1972, every area of South Central Los Angeles, including Compton, East Compton, Florence, Firestone, Athens, Willowbrook and Carson had been divided up and was totally saturated with a street gang presence. The original gangs that were in place in 1972 are still in place today. It should be noted that some Crip street gangs were in place by late 1971.

Myth number 8:

Raymond Washington was the leader of all the Crip gangs.

Truth:

Raymond was the leader of only one gang. His original gang. Each neighborhood had, and has, its' own leaders. Stanley "Tookie" Williams, and Jimel Barnes were a couple of Crips that were very muscular, and as a result a lot of Crips looked up to them. A number of Crips would follow Tookie and Jimel around events like the Watts Festivals because of their muscular physiques. That was as close as it got to having a single leader. Gang bangers, like Tookie, always wanted and tried to be the single leader of the Crips, but it never worked out. Factually, even Tookie didn't have his own set. Jimel was the recognized leader of the Avalon Gardens Crips.

Myth number 9:

"Between 1973 and 1975 several of the non-Crip gangs decided to form a united federation.....because of the Crips sheer numbers they terrorized the other non-Crip gangs, resulting in the first Crip against Blood gang related homicide".

Truth:

There is no denial that a homicide, as described above, may have occurred, but it was not the first homicide between the Blood and the Crip gangs. A number of homicides had already occurred between these different groups dating back to at least early 1972. It should also be noted that there were no accurate gang homicide statistics prior to 1979.

Myth number 10:

"A dramatic increase in the number of gangs from 1978 to 1982, which was evident in the Los Angeles, Compton and Inglewood areas, occurred during the same time when unemployment was rising because of plant closures".

Truth:

Another piece of Folklore, which attempts to tie some sort of social phenomenon for Crip gang expansion. There was not one single gang added to the Compton, and South Central area during that time frame. All of the original gangs were in place from the early 1970's to the mid 1970's, at the latest.

South Central Los Angeles:

When the term “South Central” Los Angeles Area is used, it specifically refers to the area South of Slauson, extending south through the cities of Compton. The East/West borders are basically the Harbor Frwy. on the west and the Long Beach Frwy. on the east. A portion of this area was policed by various police Departments, including LAPD 77th, Firestone Sheriff's, and Compton PD.

Much has been said about Raymond Washington starting the Crip Gang in 1969. This claim cannot be disputed, but there is no concrete evidence of his gang ever being called the Crips in 1969. Raymond and the others, who have been generally recognized as OG's, were only 14 or 15 years of age in 1969. More realistically the Crip Gang was not started, or at least not recognized, until early 1971.

The original Crip Gang members all had some common bonds. They either had an association through their High schools (Fremont, Locke, or Washington), Fred Shaw Home for Boys, Bob Simmon's Homes for Boys, or Detention Camps. In some cases all four. Most of the OG's were troubled youths who craved personal recognition. The newspaper article(s) that publicized the Crip gang's criminal activity, coupled with the attention (fear) they were receiving from their neighborhood became an attractive, volatile aphrodisiac. This recognition gave them a sense of real power, which they loved.

The Crip name, the Crip dress, and the Crip walk spread like fire throughout the Juvenile Justice System. A large number of troubled youth, who were in the juvenile detention system, wanted to be associated with this feared Crip image. Once these juveniles were released, they took this Crip identity back to their own individual neighborhoods, and formed their own Crip Gang. One problem developed though. The most hard core youth of each neighborhood wanted to be the leaders of their own neighborhoods. They wanted to have an alliance with other Crip gangs, but they definitely didn't want to take orders from any “outside” group, or person. The OG's continually tried to organize all the Crips into a one central command type of structure. That structure never materialize.

Some of the *very earliest* OG neighborhood Crip gangs formed along both sides of Central Ave., between Gage St. and 92 St. The Kitchen Crip gang was the first to develop East of Central Ave. The others followed within weeks. A couple of other gangs, including the Avalon Gardens Crips, were the first to form on the West Side of Central. The only other Crip gang outside this “Central Ave.” connection was the Grandee Crips in Compton. Some of the original OG Crip gangs are listed, along with a few of their recognized leaders name and/or nicknames of active members of those particular OG neighborhood gangs. It should be noted that all of the following gangs had 100 plus members.

Avalon Gardens Crips: Jimel Barnes

God father, Davis, Koonce, et al

Kitchen Crips: Hillis and Lee family

Skull, Red, Woo Boo, Cowboy, et al.

Neighborhood Crips: Gregory Davis

Batman, Black Joe, Dog D, et al.

Mafia Crips: Steven Robinson

Ba-Ba, Mad Professor, Karate Man, et al.

House Crips: Kenneth Jackson

Black, Iron Man, Pee Wee, et al.

BMCD: Foster Grigsby

Deadly Blue, Battle's, Pookie, et al.

Main Street Crip: James Compton

Little James, Squeeky, Moto, et al.

Grandee Crips: Mack Thomas

Sugar Bear, Salty, Too Sweet, et al.

A few other highly visible OG Crips in the early 1970's were Karate Man, Monkey Man, Light Bulb, Concepcion, and Paddle Foot

By the end of 1972 every area of the South Central Los Angeles felt the influence of a street gang. The Crips considered themselves "gangsters", or street thugs who were involved in every type of criminal activity. Their criminal activity was committed mostly in their own neighborhoods, e.g. burglaries, purse snatches, GTA's and narcotics. A number of anti-Crip gangs also simultaneously began forming at approximately the same rate as the Crip expansion. The first of these anti-Crip groups was the Piru Gang. This gang was located on Piru Street in the city of Compton. *The OG Piru's came from an upper middle class neighborhood in Compton.* Their original purpose of the Pirus for forming was only to keep the Crips from overrunning their own neighborhood. *Note: This group did not fit the common societal mold of believing "only poor kids that have no future are drawn to gangs".* A number of the OG Pirus even drove Fleetwood Cadillacs.

Other anti-Crip gangs begin forming alliances with each other to combat the overwhelming Crip Gang influence. I've listed some of the *earliest original OG* anti-Crip gangs, (Blood terminology did not start until the mid to late 1970's) along with a few of their recognized leaders name and/or nicknames of members of those particular OG neighborhood gangs. It should be noted that all of the following gangs also had over 100 plus members.

Pirus: Sylvester Scott

Puddin, AC, Carters, Tam, et al.

Bishops: Bobby Lavender

Turp, Clay, Space Ghost, Magoo, et al.

Bounty Hunters: Herman Coleman
King Rat, Ali Baba, Red, McGowans, et al.

Leuders Park Pirus: Marcus Nunn
China Dog, Studderbox, Black Bird, et al.

Athens Park Boys: Anthony and Michael White
Junior, Cold Train, Mooney, Butch, et al.

A number of homicides occurred between these warring factions over the years. Two of the most notable gang homicide victims were an OG Piru named “*Tam the Top*”, and an OG Grandee Crip named “*Salty*”. Their funerals were highly attended by their respective gangs. Each of their funeral processions stretched well over a mile long. Low riders, containing a minimum of four gang bangers each would hang out their vehicle’s windows, yell their gang name, and wave their respective blue or red handkerchiefs, as the funeral procession made its way to their designated cemetery. The sheer size of these funerals was an indicator of just how massive the gang problem was going to be.

The anti-Crip Gangs appeared to be much more organized than the Crip Gangs. They apparently had to be for *survival* sake. One of the most organized anti-Crip gangs was the Bishops. The Bishops were located in the unincorporated area of Firestone. Bobby Lavender was the leader of that gang.

In the early to mid 70’s the Watts Festival was a major attraction in the Watts area. The Festival was held at Will Rodgers Park for a number of years to commemorate “*the struggle of the people*”, as well as the *Watts Riot*.

Will Rodgers Park was located directly in the middle of disputed gang territory. The Black Mafia Crip Dogs and the Kitchen Crips territory were located on the north side of the park. The Bounty Hunter gang’s territory was on the south side. The Bishop territory was to the east and other smaller Crip gangs were to the west. Because of the Crips sheer size in that area, they generally “controlled” inside the park. During the festival a large number of Crips, led by bare chested Tookie and Jimel Barnes, would walk through the park intimidating Festival attendees. *Note: Tookie was a “peer leader” living in the Fred Shaw home for boys on Slater St., in Compton during this time frame.* Tookie later moved to the Bob Simmon’s Home for boys on Atlantic Ave. in Compton.

Surrounding the park would be the anti-Crip gangs, just standing and watching. On the west side of the park, a large contingent of Sheriff’s personnel were stationed on standby, should a major incident occur inside the park. Sometime during the evening hours whistling would begin. The anti-Crip group would run into the park. Simultaneously the Crips would start running through the park hitting festival goers, knocking over booths, assaulting, and robbing people as they made their way towards the rival gangs. Once the anti-Crip groups were actually inside the park, fights between the two groups would break out. Shots

being fired and people being injured were common place. Sheriff's deputies would enter the park and make hundreds of gang member arrests. This occurred every night, of every year, the Festival was scheduled.

Bobby Lavendar, from the Bishop gang, saw this Festival problem as an opportunity for him to form a more organized group (gang) called *Brothers Unlimited*. The Brothers Unlimited would be headed up by him, and Harold Tyiska from the Family Bloods. The group would also include some Crip members to give it an appearance of balance. All of the members were a little older and had all been trained in Marshal Arts. The original membership of Brother Unlimited was approximately 35-50 individuals. Their initial goal was to be the security for the Watt's Festival, and then use that success as a spring board for bigger and better things. Unfortunately for the Brothers Unlimited, the Watts Festival group lost their permit to hold anymore Festivals in Will Rogers Park due to the gang violence. The Brothers Unlimited also fizzled after a year, or so of trying to get a foothold in the South Central area.

In the early 1970's the Crips sarcastically referred to the Pirus as Roosters. The Pirus referred to the Crips as Crabs. In the mid 1970's the anti-Crip gangs joined forces and began calling themselves Bloods. The Crips then begin calling the Bloods "Slobs". As the name calling evolved, so did the graffiti on the walls. Anytime a "B" or a "C" was written on a wall it would be crossed out by the rival gang. The crossing out on the wall soon evolved into their speech. Crips would substitute the letter "C" in place of a "B", and conversely the Bloods would do the same thing, but a "B" would be substituted for the "C", e.g. concrete would be boncrete, etc. Conversation like "what it "C" like, or what it "B" like became common place. "Cuzz" and "Blood" still remain words used in greetings, or in a confrontational situations. Obviously this depended on who they're talking with.

Also during this same time frame, other changes begin to occur. Crips no longer wanted the notoriety that they once so enjoyed. They soon learned police officers were giving special attention to those individuals wearing the Crip "uniform" dress. They begin to dress "normal" in every manner in hopes of not drawing so much attention from law enforcement. The exception to this was that they always had the color blue on. The same situation was being experienced in the Blood gang areas. Crips started wearing blue baseball caps, and/or blue windbreakers, e.g. Dodgers, etc. It could be something as small as blue shoe laces in their tennis shoes. The same situation occurred with the Bloods, e.g. red base ball hats, etc. This even evolved into the names and types of apparel the gang members would wear, e.g. "C/K" (Calvin Klien) apparel, etc. The Bloods said the C/K stood for Crip Killer, etc., etc.

By the mid 1970's street gang activity had completely spread throughout the Los Angeles area, including cities like Lynwood. By the early 1980's, Crack Cocaine became the drug of choice. PCP had previously been the drug of choice by both Crips and Bloods. The Crips and the Bloods soon begin organizing their own drug cartels that would eventually spread throughout the major cities in our country.

Names like Freeway Rick, Whitey Enterprises, etc. became synonymous with drug dealing.

In the mid to late 1970's the founder of the Crip Gang, Raymond Washington, and a few other OG individuals, like Stanley Tookie Williams, stepped back from the high visibility of the street gang scene. Raymond began hanging around a motorcycle group, because he said "*those youngsters (referring to the Crips and Bloods) were too crazy*". Raymond was murdered on Aug. 9th, 1979 just a few blocks from his home. Tookie continued being the ultimate gangster. Unfortunately for Tookie, the muscular physique that once gained him the attention that he so much craved as a Crip, also made him easily recognizable in his life of crime. *Tookie had to make a choice. Leave his life of crime, or leave no witnesses.* He chose the latter. Tookie was subsequently arrested for four heinous homicides that he committed in 1979. *On December 13th, 2005, after 24 years on death row, Tookie finally paid the ultimate, and final price for living the life of a Crip Gangster.*

Curtis Jackson