

Hispanic gangs target Blacks in Los Angeles



'Mara 18' gang members EPA/Gustavo Amador

By Karyn Chenoweth Oct 26, 2007,

Newsweek is reporting that Federal prosecutors say a powerful Latino gang systematically targeted rival black gang members and innocent black civilians in a reign of terror.

Reporter Andrew Murr writes that a south Los Angeles Latino street gang targeted African-American gang rivals and other blacks in a campaign of neighborhood "cleansing," federal prosecutors say.

"Alleged leaders and foot soldiers in the Hispanic gang Florencia 13, also called F13, are being arraigned this week on charges stemming from a pair of federal indictments that allege that the gang kept a tight grip on its turf by shooting members of a rival gang—and sometimes random black civilians," writes Murr.

The "most disturbing aspect" of the federal charges was that "innocent citizens ... ended up being shot simply because of the color of their skin," U.S. Attorney Thomas O'Brien told reporters in announcing the indictments, according to the Newsweek report.

Murr cites that drug turf wars are at the heart of the enmity between the gangs of Latinos and the Blacks.

"L.A. Sheriff's Department statistics chart the war's violent toll: 80 gang-related shootings in the past three years, including 20 murders," writes Murr.

The indictments provide a telling snapshot of the changing nature of gangs in south L.A. According to federal prosecutors, F13 has grown into a tightly controlled gang of 2,000

members in 30 cliques led by convicts and parolees who are members of the prison-based Mexican mafia, reports Murr.

Murr cites that the eighties saw the reign of the black drug gangs, including the Crips and the Bloods, mining the crack epidemic with ruthless efficiency.

Murr writes: "Compared with looser Latino gangs that were seen as turf-conscious fighters, the black gangs were organized and disciplined. 'The stereotype was that [the black gangs] were all about the [drug] business,' says gang researcher Cheryl Maxson, an associate professor of criminology at University of California, Irvine. With the black gangs, 'there was a millionaire in every neighborhood' perched at the top of the crack distribution pyramid, adds gang expert, who edits streetgangs.com."

A flip in power and structure and organization has occurred, according to Olivia Rosales, she a hard-core gangs prosecutor for the L.A. district attorney's office who prosecuted F13 and Crips homicide cases for two years.

Murr reports Rosales heads one of the DA's satellite offices.

"The East Coast Crips weren't as organized."