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Latin Kings: Friends

or Enemies?

Case File

In 1996 Antonio “King Tone” Fernandez took control of New York City’s Latin Kings, one of its largest and most violent gangs. In poor neighborhoods, some people saw him as a working class hero leading the gang away from crime. The police saw him as a big time thug. As a result, much attention was given to inner-city gangs. As an internet blogger assigned to study the issue, your job is to decide: Are the Latin Kings friends of the neighborhood, public enemies, or both?

H. S. I.

(History Subject Investigation)

Latin Kings: Neighborhood Friends or Public Enemies?

Acting as Detective

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The Resources

- Record A: Excerpt from the Almighty Latin King Nation Manifesto/Constitution
- Record B: Excerpt from “The Latin Kings Speak” (Mar. 28, 2002)
- Record C: “Chicago Latin King Leader Convicted” (Jul. 22, 2008)
- Record D: Background on the Latin Kings
- Record E: “Building Peace, Unity, and Justice in Greensboro” (Jul. 13, 2009)

Investigating the Issue

For each of the above Records, you will complete the Record File. In the Record File you will answer the following questions:

1. Who wrote the document?
2. When was the document written?
3. What type of document is it? (newspaper article, internet blog, official document, interview)
4. How are the Latin Kings described in the document?
5. What is some evidence in the document to support the issue?

Judging the Issue

Based on your study of the 5 Records and the Record File you prepared, write a short essay that answers the question – Are the Latin Kings friends of the neighborhood, public enemies, or both? In the essay, please use at least 3 pieces of evidence from the Records themselves.

RECORD A

Excerpt from A. L. K. N. Constitution

www.geocities.com/MotorCity/Downs/3548/gangs/lk.htm

ALMIGHTY LATIN KING NATION

Lessons

1) The Puerto Rican Flag

A. Red-The Blood

B. White-The Peace

C. Blue-Liberty/The Ocean

THE FIVE POINTS OF THE STAR REPRESENTS THE COLONIES OF THE FIVE ISLANDS

1)Puerto Rico

2)Cuba

3)Jamaica

4)Haiti

5)Dominican Republic

The Puerto Rican Flag is respected as if it was your crown, because your crown represents your nation. This flag represents the majority of the "Almighty Latin King Nation".

2) The Body- The entire physical structure, the whole frame which is 360° complete, respect your body and treat it well for its this body that walks you through the nation. a Kings body is his armor and protector of the heart and soul.

3) The Heart- Is the central force of your body and nation. The heart gives life to you body as it protects your nation.

4) The Soul- Is your being of expressing a deep feeling. The life and spirit of your nation.

5) The Nation- People organized under a single government and race. "Latinos" we are brothers who came together to form a nation of respect, knowledge, honesty, unity and love... (Amor De Rey) ...

11) Latin Kings will do their best to learn their heritage & culture.

12) A king is the foundation of his family he must provide structure & order plus build & multiply

13) Education expands the capacity of a kings knowledge forever.

14) Understanding of one's knowledge and actual application forever.

15) Respect is the appreciation of one's knowledge & understanding forever.

RECORD B

Excerpt from "The Latin Kings Speak - Talk by a Latin King Leader Mar. 28, 2002" to a group of college students studying gangs (www.gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/latinkings/Reyx.html)

How the Latin Kings Started

The Latin Kings were a small organization when they first started and there were nothing but street gangs in the city of Chicago in the 1950's but people only concentrate about the blacks and the Latinos because it was during the civil rights movement and that's the focus. But at the same time there were a lot of Polish gangs, and Jewish gangs. A variety, a variety of gangs all over the city. The difference is that the Caucasian groups of the gangs were already set on the track of being politicians, commissioners, police officers and everything. We were set on a track of poverty.

Gangs, Racism, and Survival

And the basis of gangs is the basis of poverty and racism. When you have poverty and racism, inequality, lack of a stable economic base in the community, you're gonna have gangs whether you like it or not. Nowadays they just so happen to be black and latinos. Why? Because we're the ones that have the lack of economics in our community. Some people say you know pull yourself up by your own bootstraps right and we always say, well what if we don't got boots. Then what? You know. And there's never a response to that. I'm not here to justify anything that has happened because yeah there are bad people in these gangs.

RECORD C

"Chicago Latin King Leader Convicted," July 22, 2008 in
The Chicagoist (Internet blog)
(chicagoist.com/2008/07/22/chicago_latin_king_coo_convicted.php)

Today, a federal jury convicted Fernando King, the "chief operating officer" of the Chicago Latin Kings street gang, of drug conspiracy and attempted cocaine distribution. King, also referred to as the "supreme Inca," is the reputed number two in the Latin King chain of command. King has been in custody since December 2006 and is scheduled to be sentenced December 3. He faces a minimum of 20 years in prison. The jury caused a bit of stir because the note they handed the judge with their verdict also expressed concern for their own "security and safety," causing the defense to motion for a mistrial which was denied by the judge.

After court, King's lawyer, Joseph Lopez, said the note raised concerns that the jury may have been influenced by evidence that wasn't part of the trial.

The jury apparently was worried "without anyone ever threatening them or giving them a mean look," Lopez said after the verdict. "Apparently they thought more about their safety than they did about the case."

Prosecutors declined to comment on the jury's note.

King was convicted largely on testimony by informant Jesse Guajardo, who recorded much of the gang's drug activities.

RECORD D

Background on the Latin Kings from KnowGangs.com
(www.knowgangs.com/gang_resources/profiles/kings)

The Almighty Latins King Nation

The Almighty Latin King Nation first emerged in Chicago during the 1940s when several young Puerto Rican males organized into a club. Their goal was to help each other overcome the problems of racism and prejudice that newly arriving Puerto Rican immigrants were experiencing.

Their slogan was to rise above the racism and to form an organization of "Kings" to better serve themselves and their communities. As time progressed, the group took a criminal path as it's members became involved in violent crimes including murders, drug sales and robberies.

The Latin Kings are Chicago's largest gang and have been involved in numerous violent acts. Although the original members were of Puerto Rican decent, most members are now Mexican-American. They now allow members of all races to join, yet they are mostly composed of Spanish, Caribbean, Latvian, Italian, Portuguese, Mexican or South American members...

The Chicago Police Department estimates they have over 25,000 Latin King members residing within their city alone. The gang also has organized chapters in numerous states across the country. These gang sets are referred as to as "Chapters" among members with each reporting to a leader. The head of the entire criminal organization is known as the Inca....

Some of the characteristics that sets the Latin Kings apart from other gangs is they consider themselves to be a community-based organization. They preach Hispanic pride and some King chapters even have formed their own religion called Kingdism. During these meetings members may recite the Latin King pledge, prayer and continually pledge to be prepared to rise to the call for their King or Inca. These meetings are often used by members to discuss retaliating against other gangs, drug disciplined for breaking gang rules.

When compared to most street gangs, the Latin Kings are generally more structured and organized. The gangs rules are strictly enforce and some members celebrate January 6th as "King's Holy Day" and the first week in March as "King's Week."

RECORD E

Building Peace, Unity, and Justice in Greensboro

By SCSJ - Posted on July 13th, 2009

(www.southerncoalition.org/node/129)

In an effort to build peaceful, nurturing communities, the Beloved Community Center, the Pulpit Forum, and the Almighty Latin Kings and Queens Nation of Greensboro (ALKQN), North Carolina, have been working together for over a year to deal with the problems of gang violence in Greensboro. Taking a grassroots perspective, this collaborative has focused on the positive potential for street groups in low-income and communities of color to be a resource to build peace and unity in their communities. Unfortunately, in the past year the ALKQN has been harassed and falsely charged many times by the Greensboro Police Department's Gang Unit, who has attempted to complicate the peace process by intimidation, and illegitimate arrests.

Jorge Cornell (better know as King J), as the Inca (leader) of the Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation in Greensboro, initiated the peace process on June 25th, 2008 in a meeting at the Beloved Community Center during their weekly Wednesday Community Discussion Table. Cornell set out his vision for peace and has since worked very closely with Rev. Nelson Johnson and community members at the Beloved Community Center and the Pulpit Forum. The growth in Black and Brown unity in their efforts to reduce gang violence and help build a positive community environment for youth of color has been met by an increasingly harsh anti-gang taskforce that has made many attempts to harass the ALKQN...

Empowering communities

Just before Thanksgiving 2008, the Southern Coalition for Social Justice became involved with this unique group in Greensboro. Our work with these organizations has focused first on utilizing our media and community organizing resources to further efforts to quell gang violence in this area.

In addition, we have also investigated and succeeded in having dismissed 12 criminal charges pending against members of the Latin Kings and helped with the successful prosecution of a security guard who physically assaulted a Latin Kings and Queens member in a public bus depot without provocation. Taking the next step, we are now working with these organizations to curb overzealous police efforts focused on Latinos in the Triad such that the community can remain safe, while its residents are free from racial profiling.

We believe that this work is a powerful model for similar interventions in gang activity on the community level throughout the South. These efforts bring to the forefront the unique support SCSJ can offer to communities in need, whether it pertains to organizing assistance, media outreach, or legal representation.

H. S. I. - Latin Kings: Friends of the Neighborhood or Public Enemies?

| | Who wrote the document? | When was the document written? | What type of document is it? | How are the Latin Kings described? | What evidence supports the issue? Circle either Friend or Enemy. |
|----------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Record A | | | | | Friend Enemy |
| Record B | | | | | Friend Enemy |
| Record C | | | | | Friend Enemy |
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| Record E | | | | | Friend Enemy |