

*S . A . C .  
Save America's Children*



## **GANGS ANONYMOUS**

### **The Twelve Steps**

Here are the steps we took which are suggested as a program of recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over gangs, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and become willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we are wrong promptly admit it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him. Praying only for the knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other gang members, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

### **PREAMBLE**

Gangs Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problems and help others to break the cycle of gang affiliation, and recover from drugs and alcohol abuse.

The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to break away from gang affiliation; really look at what gang affiliation, drug, and alcohol abuse have done to you and others.

There are no dues or fees for Gangs Anonymous membership, this is our program; therefore, we will support it through our own contributions.

Gangs Anonymous is not allied with any sect, denomination, political party, organization or institution, does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any cause. Our primary purpose is to break the cycle of gang affiliation and help others to achieve sobriety.

# HOW IT WORKS

(Adapted from Chapter Five of the AA Big Book)

Rarely have we seen a member fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those brothers and sisters who do not recover are people who are unwilling to try a new way of life; mainly to give this simple program of Gangs Anonymous a try. These people are unfortunates. These are people, who, because of gang affiliation, alcohol, and drug abuse have hurt themselves, their families, other people, and have spent time in jails, hospitals, prisons, and yet seem to be incapable of grasping and developing a new way of life which demands rigorous honesty and clean living. Unfortunately, these brothers and sisters chances are less than average. Many of them will either be killed, or spend the rest of their lives in state institutions.

As ex-gang members in recovery, our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened while in the gang, and what our lives are like today. For those of you who have decided you want what we have to offer and are willing to go to any length to get in – then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, cooler way. Many of us felt that to leave the gang would make us squares and others would call us soft. This caused many of us to try to have it both ways. We pretended we were still active gang members while making half attempts being sincere about recovering from the affects of being in gangs and on drugs. But we failed.

# COURAGE TO CHANGE

It is with all the earnestness at our command, that we beg of you to be fearless and through from the very start. Many of us have tried to hold onto our old ideas and found that this does not work. We learned that there is only one way to go if we are serious about our lives, and that is to give our all to this program. We must give up our old ways and be willing to accept the Gangs Anonymous way of life.

Remember brothers and sisters, we are dealing with one, two, for many of us three separate problems. Many of us are dealing with alcohol and drug addiction, pushing drugs, as well as breaking the cycle of gang affiliation. From experience, we know how very cunning, baffling, and powerful these problems are, and know that without help it is too much for us. But we are not alone; there is one who has all power – that one is God. May you find Him now!

# GANGS ANONYMOUS

## HOW IT BEGAN

### SOME OF OUR STORIES

#### CONTENTS

How it Began	6
Sharing Stories	7
1976	8
Jimmy	9-10
Ron	11
Juan	12-13
John	14-15
Sheila	16-17
Growing up in East Los Angeles	18-19
Anonymous	20
South Central	21-22
I Love You	23-24
Make It Known	25
Meeting	26

# GANGS ANONYMOUS – HOW IT BEGAN

Gangs Anonymous began in the California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo. One of the inmates, David Dew, had been a member of AA and NA for many years and felt that the same principles used in these programs could also work for gang members. He felt that members of gangs needed to have a program where they could feel safe in sharing all their feelings, what they did as gang members, and what they want to do about their relationship with gangs. They need a place where it doesn't matter if you were from a rival gang, as long as you wanted to do something about the killing and violence that is so much a part of gang life these days. Mr. Dew began to share his feelings with gang members in the prison. He heard their stories about their family lives, their neighborhoods, and how the gangs filled a hole in their life. He learned that most gang members just want to belong, be heard, and be respected. It also became very clear how much of an influence alcohol and drugs have on gangs and their activities. Some members had never drunk much or used any drugs before joining the gang; however many of their parents drank and used drugs.

Gangs Anonymous is about being together because of a common bond. A bond that constantly shows each member that they are not alone in how they feel and what happens to them before they joined a gang. They share feelings about how they felt during the violence, the killings, and the confusion of gang life and how the drugs and alcohol increased the problems and violence. In the meetings, members share their experiences, their fears, their strengths and their hope. This gives them a chance to let go of feelings they may have had for years but just didn't have a place to talk about it. It was generally felt by the inmates who have become members that gangs would probably continue until gang members who have changed their way of living could become an example, showing that it is possible to have a life after gangs and that they can make a difference.

Approximately sixty inmates have participated in the meetings even though the prison has not given formal approval. Some of the inmates gave Mr. Dew their stories to share with others on the outside with a desire to help others avoid the heartache they experienced in being gang members. This is their way of trying to help turn the gang problem around. These stories were mailed to a friend on the outside and have been assembled together.

# SHARING OUR STORIES

I grew up in a home where my mother called all the shots. My father and mother got a divorce. My father would bring his kids over from his new marriage and make fun of me. I hated his guts! I was ranked number four in California's track teams. Colleges from all over the country were trying to recruit me for their schools but something was wrong with me. I wanted and needed attention and to belong to something.

I became a gang member. I knew they would accept me. I did a lot of things I regret. I ended up in prison, and met a gang member from the gang I used to fight. He and I talked, and we both felt ashamed for all we had done to others. We would talk all night about why we had gone out looking for people to hurt. It was during this time that I made a promise to myself that I wanted to be on the other side. I was tired of seeing so many young people die. I don't want to ever hurt anyone again.

I arrived at this prison and one day I started talking to this guy named David D. He showed me some of the Gangs Anonymous papers. I read it. David and I spent the next week together sharing. We hope to take this program into every community which has a gang problem. This program changed my life and if practiced can change the lives of others.

By: Mr. C.

# 1976

In 1976, I joined a street gang in Long Beach, California. All OG's are still alive physically, but have been bent down by social pressures and have been in prison. We were gangsters. Today I am sorry for my past.

After awhile, I started asking myself, "Why are we doing this to each other?" Why are we doing this to other people? It was during this time in my life when I met David D. I would see him sitting in the yard talking to other gang members. One day I was called over. David shared with me – we had to do something about the killings. That too many kids were dying and too many mothers and fathers were crying. That was when he shared with me about Gang Anonymous. I could not believe this. For the very first time I felt we had something that could turn the young ones around. I have committed myself to Gangs Anonymous and plan to carry the message all over the country.

When I reflect, I just can't believe I conducted myself like that. But I have learned that people can change. I know that I have a responsibility to the young gangsters and I am committed to this.

By: EP



# A STORY FROM JIMMY

Jimmy grew up in San Diego. He remembers that his father was never home, and when he was, he usually beat Jimmy and put him down. The only thing he really remembers about his mother was her telling him he was no good and would never be any good. It was feelings like these which led him to the gang. He had heard about how much trouble gang members got in, but what he experienced was a feeling of belonging.

Some of the gang members became like a family to him and after a while, he didn't mind when they would go and pull a job or beat up some other gang members, because to him, he was part of a family who took him in when his own mother and father had turned their back on him. This is why he buried all the bad things he was doing, such as selling drugs, beating up other men simply because they wore a different color and hating other blacks because they were from some other part of town.

What Jimmy found out later was that he had no identity, without the gang, he felt like he was nothing. After many years of living like this, he soon ended up in prison. Only he was fortunate. He had only been shot once in the chest, and he didn't have a life sentence like most of the brothers he knew from the hood. He spent many hours in prison walking the yard and lying to himself and others about how good it felt to "bang", knowing inside that he was scared to death.

He started to wonder what he was going to do with his life. Since he had been gone, all the guys he knew were either in prison for life, or they were dead. He knew that his mother was very sick, and this was partly because of all she had heard about him. He didn't know where he was going to go or what he was going to do. He was getting older, and as he looked back at his life, all he knew was selling drugs and carrying guns. He now realized that he had spent a large part of his life on nothing. How could he sit back years from now and tell his kid that he had spent his life hating other black men simply because they wore different colors than he did?

What thinking woman would want a man who had a mind like this? He often wondered how in the world he got to thinking like this. It was then that he decided to take an honest look at himself. He stopped walking the yard and lying to the homeboys who were still asleep. He started to read. Once he did this, he was able to think more clearly. He started to watch the news, and what he saw was young people just like how he used to be, killing one another as they walked around calling themselves gang members. At some point in his room he cried. He believed he had a responsibility to those young people. This is when he met a man named David Dew.

David shared with him a program called, "Gangs Anonymous." After listening to David and other ex-gang members, he began to feel for the very first time that there was hope for him. He took the program very seriously and worked the 12 steps. He now plans to go out and start chapters of Gangs Anonymous all over the community. He feels that he has been given a second chance and he thanks

his Higher Power for this new-found hope. He has no anger at other gang members. He only wants to share with them the mistakes he made.

## RON

Ron grew up in South Central Los Angeles, and from an early age, he was taught by older “Crips” to hate gang members from other neighborhoods. The “Bloods” were hated and if Ron was caught talking to one of the kids in the Bloods community; he would get a beating.

So from an early age, he was taught to hate other black men simply because of a red rag, or because the guy happened to live in the wrong area. There were times when he would accidentally run across

someone from another hood. For some reason, he just didn't want to hate this person, but some other homeboys would come by and see him talking to them, and they would jump off their bikes and the fight would start.

This is how Ron grew up. He spent many years fighting other blacks, simply because they wore a different color than he did. After many fights and drive-bys, he was eventually sent to a boy's school. This is where the gang violence really takes off, because once you get there the very same people you have been fighting with all your life are there waiting to kill you. You have no choice once you get locked away; you are either going to join your neighborhood gang, or be left for the other gangs to kill you.

After having experienced this, Ron knew that he was doomed. Even if he had wanted to get out, it was harder for him in prison. There they ran together in groups, and if you were a Crip, and decided not to "bang" anymore, you are left open and soon or later, some Blood will get his homeboys and they will really do a job on you. You would be lucky if you got out alive.

When Ron got out of boys' school, he had more scars and more hatred for Bloods and Latino gangs. He was tough, and he simply got out, grabbed a crack sack, and was standing on the corner selling his drugs. He was totally unaware that he was being used by older, smarter gang members.

Finally, after his mother's house was shot up and his little sister got shot, he was sent to prison for the rest of his life. After he saw his little sister lying in her grave, he became so angry that he couldn't think. He only knew he had to get even. This is how he ended up for the rest of his life in prison.

Never will he get a chance to sit down with his family for Christmas. Never will he be free so that he can be there when his mother gets old and needs him. He won't be there when his mother is lying on her deathbed bed, calling out his name. Instead, he will be standing in some chow line in prison, and when he learns of his mother's death, he will then feel the real feelings of being completely helpless! For the people behind the walls don't care about your mother. You are alone. This was Ron's story.

## JUAN

Juan's family came over from Mexico before he was born. They moved to Los Angeles, and his parents worked very hard to make sure that the kids had food on the table. But at some point, his father started to drink and to beat his mother. As Juan watched this, his hatred for his father grew.

Juan's neighborhood was in East L.A. and the gang was really alive in that place. Juan knew that he had to get money to help his mother take care of his brothers and sisters. But his mother worked two

jobs because she did not want her son to get involved in the gangs. She knew her son was smart, and if he stayed in school he could graduate and go on to college. This was the dream Juan's mother had for him.

But as he tried to go on to school, he kept hanging out with gang members who had similar experiences as he, and together they had a bond. Juan forgot about what his mother was trying to tell him, and started selling drugs and getting involved in drive-bys. He found that he also hated other Mexican people. He had forgotten about the stories his mother had shared with him about how their people loved one another and would stand up for each other. She'd tell him that Mexican Americans were a proud people and they had a bond which would last through anything.

Being in the gang, Juan forgot about the brotherly love his mother had shared with him at one point. One of his homeboy's little brother got shot in a drive-by and the friend was hurt and angry. He got with Juan and the two of them got with other members of their gang, and shot a lot of innocent people. This didn't bother Juan then, but it did later when his little sister was shot coming home from school. This car pulled up beside her, she tried to run, but it was too late. They guys opened fire on her, killing her right there on the side walk.

When Juan's mother learned that her baby had been killed and by whom, she became very angry with Juan. She blamed him for getting involved with the gangs, as she was in so much pain. Juan didn't know what to do. He had lost his little sister, and he knew that it was because of him. He knew that his little sister would never again walk with him to the store. She would never again walk into his room and ask him for money. He was her older brother and she had really looked up to him.

He saw the pictures of his little sister as she was lying on the streets with bullet holes in her. He just cried. He would have given his life to trade places with his sister, but it was too late. She was gone, and the only person he could blame was himself. His mother became withdrawn, and eventually she stopped working. It was as if she had set her death in motion.

Juan blamed himself, and vowed to get the people who killed his sister. He did, only Juan wasn't lucky. He was shot in the back, and for the rest of his life he will be in a wheel chair. As he sits in prison in the chair, he holds a picture of his little sister and he often wishes he could turn back the clock, but he can't. She is dead. He might as well be dead because he is through.

In talking with Juan, he often talks about his mother and wonders if she will ever forgive him. He is alone. This was what the gang brought to this family.

## JOHN

John was a man who was being brought up in a very loving family. He was an only child, and his mother would give him just about everything he asked for. Still, there was something wrong with John. For one thing, he felt that his parents didn't understand him. Plus, he was a very good football player in school, but he had this craving for attention. For some reason he wasn't getting attention from school or from home.

As he began to go to school, he noticed a group of guys who always stood out. These guys always had plenty of pretty girls around and everyone either respected them, or was afraid of them. In John's mind, these guys were "cool". They were the talk of the town. The teachers were afraid of them. They didn't have to be home on time. They simply did whatever they wanted to do. They were so cool.

As time went on, John started to lie to his parents about where he was going. He would tell his mother that he was going to the store, or he would say he was going over to someone's house to study. This allowed him to meet with the gang members in the other communities and get high. This is where it all started. When John tried his first joint, and his first drink, he became that man he

always knew he could be. He was no longer the “square” on the block, no longer the guy everyone laughed at. Now he was a “gang member” and people had better respect him.

Nights began to pass without him doing his studies. He stopped being an “A” student and after awhile, it didn’t matter anymore. After the teachers called his mother and shared with her what was going on at school, John became very upset with the teacher as well as his mother. But once his father found out about this, he decided to punish John. This is when things in the family got out of control. The family didn’t know how to communicate with John, and he didn’t know how to sit down and share with his family what he was feeling. Had he done so, he would not be spending the rest of his life in prison.

Following the fight with his father, John hated the teachers in school because he felt that they had told on him only to get him in trouble. He didn’t ever think they were trying to help him. So he just dropped out of school, telling his family that he was leaving. This broke his mother’s heart, and the father didn’t know what to do.

John went to his homeboy’s home and they started to go out at night. When they got a chance to make some money, they did. It was on a night such as this they pulled a robbery and in the process a man was killed.

They were caught two weeks later, and as the trial proceedings went on, they were told the DA was seeking the death penalty. Both were offered a deal: life in prison, or take a chance in court. They both knew that if they had gone to trial, they would surely be found guilty, so they took the deal. They are both spending the rest of their lives in prison. John and his friend will never get another chance to listen to their parents. For the rest of their lives, they will be taking orders from an officer in prison.

## SHEILA'S STORY

The following story was told by an inmate who was really close to Sheila

Sheila lived in New York, where either you fought for what you wanted, or you didn't get it. She lived with her mother and baby brother. She went to school, and at night she worked the local hot dog stand. Each night she went to work there were car-loads of young gang members (girls) who would come and order hot dogs. All of them would be dressed in really cool looking clothing, and they had a very hard look about them. Once they came to the stand, other square girls would leave. These girls always had the cool looking boyfriend. The ones with the really hip cars that were really low to the ground. They were hot.

Sheila's mother often told her about those kinds of people, saying that that they were gang members, that the girls all ended up with babies and most of them either got shot or cut up really bad, or ended up with AIDS. When she heard these kinds of discussions from her mother, she would get really scared and go off to work and not give these people another thought. But one night as she was leaving her job, she was approached by one of the girl leaders. The girl told her that she should get out of the cheap job and get with the new program.

At first, the girl seemed really nice to Sheila, so she didn't run away from her. But after about three months of lying to her mother about where she was going, spending her time getting high with her new girl friend and the rest of the gang, she had changed into a completely different person. She no longer had the time to sit down and talk with her kid brother, or listen as her mother told her about the bad people. In fact, she found herself defending these gangs, telling her mother that she just didn't understand.

There was this big party planned for the gang on a Friday night. What Sheila didn't know was that she had to go through a process before she could be fully accepted as a true gang member. There are two ways you can get in with most of these gangs. One way is to fight all the girls, getting your face all

messed up, cut, kicked, hair pulled out. Anyway, Sheila was too afraid to fight, so she chose the other way, she had to have sex with twenty guys, one of whom had AIDS. They kept her there in that place all night long and in the morning everyone was gone.

She was angry, but felt that she had proved that she was tough enough to get into any gang just like the rest of the girls. It was six months later when she started to feel different. She continued to feel strange and after awhile she went to the doctor. She had many tests, all of which were negative. She thought it was all in her mind. But about three weeks later, she got really sick. This is when one of the girls from the gang suggested she go get an AIDS test. She went, and a week later she was called in and told that she had tested positive for AIDS.

She ran from the hospital screaming. She felt that she was going to die, and she kept asking herself why? Why did she feel it was necessary to get into a gang just to prove she was tough? She is learning as she battles AIDS that the really tough people are the ones who stay in school, the ones who are smart enough to know that gangs are on their way out. You will either end up with AIDS, which slowly kills you, or in prison for the rest of your life, or dead.



# GROWING UP IN EAST LOS ANGELES

I was born and raised in East Los Angeles. Growing up all I saw around me was low-riders and pretty cars filled with pretty girls. At an early age, I knew I wanted to be like those guys. I didn't care about how I got there.

My mother worked hard and so did my father. They did their best, but I couldn't shake what I was seeing. What happened, as time went on, was that older guys who were gang members would see me hanging around, and after awhile, they started having me carry packages of dope.

As I did this, people started to respect me. I felt I was somebody. I told myself that I wasn't going to be one of those Mexicans who worked in the fields picking other people's food. I was going to make it big! This kind of thinking is what got me caught up in the gang. As the years passed, I got deeper into carrying drugs for the older guys, until finally, I started my own thing. I would get younger guys, who had started out like I did, to run my drugs. It started to feel like I was somebody. I met this girl from a nice side of town, and we got married. A year later she had my son. I was on top of the world! Then some rival gang members shot one of my homeboys. I had to get with other guys to take care of business. I went along with them, not to kill the guy, but help beat him up really bad. Only things got out of hand.

The guy and two of his friends got killed, and I was arrested along with the rest of my homeboys. I am now sitting in prison with 17 to life. I know that from the way laws are out there, I will never get out, because in my file it states "gang member." In this place, that means you will never see the streets again.

Something happened the other day which made me go back to my cell and cry. My ex-wife (when I got my prison time, she left me) came and brought my 13 year old son to see me. He told me this, "Daddy, I want to be just like you. I don't care if they put me in prison for life. I don't even care if I get the death sentence, as long as I live up to the name." That hurt me so badly. I tried to tell him that being in the gang was a big mistake, and that killing people, especially his own race of people, does not make sense. I told him about this place. I told him how lonely it was and how dangerous it was. Yet he wouldn't listen. I blame myself for that. I know that my son is going to either be killed or end up like me, spending the rest of his life in prison.

I was talking to a black guy named David, and he told me about Gangs Anonymous. I asked him if he could get my son involved. David told me about the program and for the very first time in my life, I heard something which I knew as an ex-gang member would work. I told David that if he got the program started in prison, me and many of my friends would get involved. My reason for getting

involved is for the younger teenagers out there who are like my son. I believe that had a program such as Gangs Anonymous been around years ago, many of the younger gang members wouldn't be in here serving life sentences. I love all my people. I wish I had known back then what I know now. I wish I could be a father to my son. But like my son said to me, "Daddy, how can you tell me not to, when I remember you telling me that this was the life – you can't tell me not to now. I am going to make them respect me like they did you."

In closing I say to the young person who walks in into the meeting, you have the power. Always remember this: it is what you think of yourself that really counts. Don't let someone fool you into thinking that gang life is the way. I am here to tell you that not one of those people will walk up and take this life sentence I am doing.

So if your leader isn't willing to do a life sentence for you, why should you put your life in the hands of people like that? If you already know that society as a whole is out to clean the streets of gang members, this should tell you that it is bad. It is time to prove to yourself, and everyone around you, that you can become the person you want to be. There is more to our people than pickers and gang members.

All we have to do is WANT TO CHANGE. I blamed everyone around me when I was given this life sentence. But once I got here and began to see all the guys I had looked up to walking the yard and running around falling to the ground whenever there was a gunshot, I got serious about my life. And even though I am never getting out of here, I want all of my people, and anyone else who is involved in gangs to know this: I pray many times, and wish many times, that I had listened. Now all I can do is hope that my son will get involved in Gangs Anonymous. The misled, so called tough guys end up in here with me with the rest of their life to think about it. That is all I have to say.

# ANONYMOUS

I am from South Central Los Angeles. I grew up watching the old gang members brainwash some wanna be's. I joined the gang simply to let all the young fools see me. I wanted them to think that I was a homeboy and that I loved them. What I really cared about was getting them to do things I wouldn't do. I would see some youngsters and I would pick them up in my BMW.

I would ride them around, put some money in their pockets, and then I would sometimes set it up so that they could have sex with some pretty girls. I will tell you, those young fools went crazy!

Before I go on, I want people to know that I am in prison doing a life sentence for killing one of those kids. I am sorry for what I did and I am telling my story to let whoever wants to read it know that there are guys like I used to be still out there.

Once I got the guys hooked on being seen riding with me, they would just do anything for me. This was when I would lay my wrap on them. I would say, "I can't ride you guys around anymore. I can't give you any more money. If you want to ride and dress like me, here is what you have to do..." This is when I would bring up crack cocaine. I told them that it was easy to sell the crack and that they wouldn't go to prison and that if they went to jail I would have someone get them out. Man, those young boys and girls would eat that up. What I didn't tell them was that if you stand out there and sell crack that any one or all three of these things could happen to them: first, go to jail; second, get robbed; third, get killed.

When I was in the business I used being a gang member to impress the suckers. I would wear my pants hanging down and talk that talk. What they didn't know when they were out there slinging my dope, was that I was sitting back laughing because it was so easy. And I did it all in the name of homeboy from my set... all that bullshit. I did it for over ten years. My family and I got rich. During that time, at least fifteen of the young fools I had out there were killed. The rest of them are now crack head/crack monsters or in prison doing life sentences. I have seen some of them, but their brains are so fried they don't even know who I am.

For you who will hate me for telling you this, I want you to know that if I didn't care I wouldn't be telling you my story.

I know this; many of you know I am telling the truth. Just sit back tonight and think about what I have said to you. Think about getting with that program that David D. has told me about – Gangs Anonymous. I think it is cool! At least you won't end up dead or in prison.

## SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES

I grew up in South Central Los Angeles. Growing up there was a life of complete hell! As a child I was not taught certain values. At an early age I started to steal bikes, break into stores, and I did this type of thing everywhere I went. Not once was I questioned by my mother and father. My mother just didn't have time for me.

I am sure I was about twelve years old when I joined the gang. There were about twenty of us and we would walk in class, fire up a joint and shoot some dice. If the teacher said anything we would simply remind him of who we were and he would shut up. He was too afraid to do anything. We all thought that was cool! The kids who were trying to study were fools to us. They were considered squares. Nobody paid them any attention. In many cases, we would take their money or trick one of them into getting high with us and once that happened, we had him. We would use him by telling him that he was a true gang member, only to get him to take the risk we were too afraid to take ourselves.

During this time I really thought I was "all of that." I mean I actually had a name and people looked up to me, so I thought. But when I would stand on the corner and listen to older gang members as they talked about prison, I felt small. I felt as if I wasn't truly a gang member because I hadn't been behind the walls. I thought no one really respected me as they did the guys who had. They would be saying, "What's up homeboy? Remember when we were at this joint and all the homeboys talked about this or that and how much fun we had when we rode down on you know who?" It was this kind of talk which helped me to make up my mind that I wanted to be able to participate in this kind of conversation. I figured that this was the only way of becoming a true gang member.

So one night, while making a drug sale, two other gang members from another group tried to rob me. I shot one of them and thought I had gotten away with it. But I was picked up the very next day and charged with murder. At first, it was no big deal. In my mind I said "I am going to join the hommies. This is my chance to become a true gang member." Only after I was told that I had twenty five to life and that I would probably never see the streets again did I start to wonder.

When I made it into prison and was standing in the yard, what I saw frightened me. I felt like I was still in South Central. All the guys I had looked up to were either on the weight pile, or just walking the yard. I thought they would be glad to see me, but most of them just looked at me as if I were crazy! There were a few who were still asleep and they weren't lifers. They were getting out so they could play around. One day I was talking to this ex-gang member who I had really respected on the streets. This guy was so feared by the other gangs and today he was telling me that I should have went to school. That what I had done was make the same mistake he had made ten years earlier and was never getting out of prison. He had two hundred years for a drive-by shooting. I didn't know what to say or do. In the back of my mind I began to see that I had been misled. I had thought it was

cool to be in a gang. That you got respect, all the girls, and money. But now, here I was in a prison where many people wanted to kill me and I had no one.

I have found out something here. That is that you can have all kinds of homeboys, but when you get into court and the DA starts talking about life in prison, no homeboy is going to take that life sentence for you. You will have to take it, because the same guy you have robbed with, went on drive-bys with, will save himself when it comes down to taking a life sentence.

I have something I want the younger people to know out there in that world. I beg you, please, don't make the same mistake I made. I am not trying to tell you how you should live your life. I am only sharing with you the truth. I wish to God I had a chance to start over again. If I did, I would welcome school; I would get me an after school job; and I would go to college. I hate this place. You are no longer yourself once you get here. Your life doesn't belong to you anymore. You constantly look over your shoulder because, sooner or later, you are going to run across a gang member from another gang who you had it out with; then you will either kill or be killed. I have a favor to ask one of you out there. I have heard of a new program which I hear is designed for gang members who want to get a better life. Since I am never getting out of here, would you please take this program seriously and let others know that as gang members we can change. I hope you will do this for me. Then someday I can look back and see a recovered gang member say something positive. This will help me do this life sentence.

# I LOVE YOU

I was born in East Los Angeles. In our neighborhood the gang was part of growing up. My parents didn't want me getting involved, but I still found a way to sneak out and join the fellows. There was something missing in me because I couldn't hear what my parents were trying to tell me. As I look back on it now, my real reason for joining the gang was because I felt that I just didn't fit in. I was smart in school and the other kids would tease me and call me names because I was the teacher's special student. It was also because most of the girls liked me. I could have gone to college and now I spend the rest of my life in prison for something I really didn't do. I was a fool!

Here is what happened. After my parents went to bed I would jump out the window and meet up with some of the gang members. For me, it wasn't that I wanted to be involved in drive-bys or hurt anybody. I just wanted to belong to what everyone called "tough guys" because they seemed to get all the attention. One night, while we were driving around, the leader suggested we swing through what's his name neighborhood and shoot up the place. When we arrived there, things didn't work out like they had planned, and when the shooting started someone got killed.

I got away, but the other guys got caught. It took about two months before my name came up. I was only thirteen at that time so I was sent to the YA. When I got there is when the real trouble started. The older gang members "used" me. They told me that since I was new, I had to hit (stab) someone before I became fully involved into the gang. They told me that if I didn't they would hit me or have someone from another gang hit me. I was scared to death! It was set up and I stabbed a guy. I almost killed him. I went to the hole and almost got beaten to death. I did my time thinking that I was a big man. It was only later that I found out that they were not through with me. So once I got out of the hole and hit the yard, guys came around giving me the high five, making me feel as if I was really somebody important, and for a minute I felt ten feet tall. You see, the reason I am sharing my story is because I know right now some young teenager is going through the same thing I went through and they are using him like they used me.

Three years later when I was about to get out of prison, I was told where to go and what my job was to be. I had to get out and take somebody out. Man, this scared me to death! I mean, I thought I have prove myself. I went ahead and made the hit and got caught. I was found guilty of first degree murder and I will never get out again because the police know it was a hit and that I was in the gang.

Three months later after being in prison my own people had me hit. They wanted me dead. They didn't trust me to keep my mouth shut. I was stabbed seventeen times. They had given me up for dead. I was in the prison hospital for over six months. Now when I use the bathroom, I have to stand there for about fifteen minutes before I can do number one. After I made it through that I was transferred. Once I hit the yard there one of the members saw me but this time I had my knife. I stabbed him and he stabbed me. This time they had to cut me all the way open. This is when I started to constantly look over my shoulder. I don't trust anyone, I can't.

If they send me to certain places I will not be able to walk the yard. I will be spending the rest of my life looking over my shoulder. I am telling you this because I don't want no one to have to live like this. If some of you out there in the free world think that you want this for a life, let me tell you something homeboy; you don't want this. I used to think I was tough. I used to think that the gang would kill and die for me. I never even dreamed that my very own people would kill me. The very gang I had killed for turned on me. This ain't about trying to scare anyone straight and I know some of you will laugh at what I am saying. For you who feel that way: I will be here when you get here, that is, if you make it this far.

To those of you who are really smart and can see from my life what can and will happen to you should you remain in the gang, I say to you, "I LOVE YOU!" As I write, I am crying. Not for me, because it is too late. I am crying because I have heard that the gang members who want to change have their own program. I hope to hear from some of you guys some day. Later on homeboys, Gangs  
Anonymous.

# MAKE IT KNOWN

## SOME OF THE MUSTS

**WE MUST** remember to protect our anonymity, and to prevent any disharmony in the **GROUP**

**THERE ARE MUST'S THAT APPLY TO EVERYONE ATTENDING**

That **NO DRUGS** or **PARAPHERNALIA** be on your person at the meetings

This is for the **PROTECTION** of the group and the fellowship as well as the meeting place

If you've **USED** today please listen and talk to someone after the meeting

**IT COSTS NOTHING** to belong to this fellowship. You are a member when you say you are

We shall **NOT WEAR**, display, use, or possess any insignias, emblems badges, buttons, caps, hats, jackets, shoes, flags, scarves, bandannas, shirts, or other pieces of coloring which are **EVIDENCE OF AFFILIATION** with or membership in any **GANG**



# MEETING FORMAT

1. Welcome member to the meeting and introduce yourself. (Hello, I'm \_\_\_\_\_,) an Ex gang member and leader for this meeting.
2. Open with a moment of silence (approximately 15-20 seconds) for the gang member who still suffers, followed by the serenity prayer.
3. Read the Preamble.
4. Is there anyone attending their first Gangs Anonymous meeting?
5. Make it known (read from page 19).
6. Recognize anyone with 24 hours or less; 30 days continuous clean, sober; no gang association for 60 or 90 days, 9 months or 1 year, or multiples of years.
7. Suggestions from the literature (refer to pamphlets available)
8. Secretary's report and any announcements of upcoming Gangs Anonymous functions or new meetings.
9. Ask for a topic or step for discussion (or introduce a speaker).
10. Begin discussion or speaker.

11. Before closing read our Seventh Tradition (that this goes to pay for rent, coffee, literature and supplies (Secretary or Treasurer passes the basket).
  
12. Closing. Usually members join in a circle and close the meeting with a prayer of their choice.