



GANGS

not glam

Do gangs give
a sense of belonging?
a sense of protection?

What Gangs are made of:
Crimes... Rituals... betrayal... broken promises...

Juveniles arrested rose by 55.8% in 2002 compared to 2001, with students forming the bulk of those arrested (77.9%), according to the Crime Statistics released by the Police. While three-quarters of the juveniles were arrested for theft and related offences, the number of juveniles arrested for rioting rose by 138.7% to 179 persons.

GANG :

a "a group of criminals who work together to commit crimes"
group of people, especially young people,
or "a group of people, especially young people, who usually go around together and who often deliberately cause trouble".

In Gang Land

For teens, being in a gang gives them a sense of belonging and a false sense of protection. Being with people who walk, talk and behave alike, makes them feel needed and important. Getting into gangs may seem easy, but getting out is a lot more complicated. Rituals, punishment, betrayal and often broken promises are the stuff that gangs are made of.

Most gangs use a façade of other seemingly harmless activities and venues for their true dealings. Gang "activities" can range from drug dealing and consumption to selling illegal VCDs, petty thefts, trying to look tough, or collecting a few dollars of protection money from those who show fear to hand over to so called "leaders".

A lot of gangs use the traditional lion dance troupes, game arcades, KTV lounges and billiard salons as a front for their gang operations. Far from being glamorous, the truth is a lot less pretty in these gangs.

True identities - Profiles of Gang members

Case 1

- Profile** : Age 19, female, joined gang as member at age 14
- Crime** : Voluntarily causing hurt
- Sentence** : 18 months probation with 12 months in girls home
- Activities** : Hang around coffee shop, attend funeral wakes to show support, hang around void decks, show up for fights that seldom happened, sit around and do nothing, spar with each other to practice moves.
- Conditions** : Must pay money, must be involved in all of the gang's activities, cannot go home however late it is until gang leaders decide to leave, must obey, must dress alike, must keep gang leader informed of movements, cannot meet friends outside of gang.
- Promises** : Protection as long as dues are paid regularly
- Promises kept** : None

Case 2

- Profile** : Age 17, male, joined gang as member at age 12
- Crime** : Selling illegal VCDs
- Sentence** : 15 months probation
- Activities** : Hang out at void decks, sell illegal VCDs, shoplift, run away from police, hang out at arcades, visit discos and pubs with false ICs
- Conditions** : wait for instructions from leaders, pay \$20 to \$50 a week for protection, must be involved in all of the gang's activities, must obey, must dress alike, no other friends outside of gang
- Promises** : Protection as long as dues are paid regularly
- Promises kept** : None

The payoff

- Jail term or fine
- Painful recovery from addiction to drugs or drinks
- Loss of education, independence, personal identity, self esteem, trust and sometimes, life
- Cause of hurt to self and others
- Constant fear of relapse or backlash
- Life changes such as move to a new home, and having to rebuild life

Crime and punishment

- *Being a member of an unlawful society*
A fine not exceeding \$3000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 years or both.
- *Being a member of an unlawful assembly armed with deadly weapon*
Imprisonment for a term which may extend to 2 years, or with fine, or with both.
- *Possession of offensive weapon*
Imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 years and shall also be punished with caning with not less than 6 strokes.
- *Voluntarily causing grievous hurt with dangerous weapon*
Imprisonment for life or with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to fine and caning.
- *Extortion*
Imprisonment for a term of not less than 2 years and not more than 7 years and with caning.

