

In My Hood

Four members of Headliners talk about their experiences of living with gangs on their doorsteps.

If you're a young person living in London then the likelihood of you knowing someone involved in a gang is quite high.

Headliners sat in on Nataleigh 15, and her friends Alysha 11, Jaclyn 12 and Samsam 15, while they discussed the rise of gang culture in West London and the knock on effect it's having on people's daily lives.

Alysha believes families are being hurt by the violence on the streets. "I just think, these gangs should think about what they have done and try and sort it out with each other. Because, to be honest, all this stabbing and shooting has got to a place where parents and families have literally broken down because they're children are dead."

But Samsam can't see a way to stop the rise of gangs. "You can't abolish gangs. It ain't like no boycott with Martin Luther King saying, 'I've got a dream...' or something. It's not a boycott with segregation; if you try to ban them it'll just go on behind peoples backs."

It may not be possible to stop young people joining gangs, but it seems the police are targeting young people with a certain look and style.

Nataleigh has found that what young people wear can lead to unwanted attention. She has seen first hand that the police are targeting hooded youths on the suspicion that they are up to no good. "I was walking down my street, and the police go, 'where do you live 'cos we're going to take you home.'

And I go why? I'm just walking home.

And they go 'I don't care. It's 'cos you've got your hood on.'

And then they go 'where do you live?'

And I'm like, just at the end of my street and so they put me in the car and drove me 30 metres down the road."

"At the time I thought it was wrong 'cos I was going home anyway and it was cold and raining. But then in some situations there are some people that go out with their hoods up so they can go beat someone up. So I think they couldn't tell if I was telling the truth. It's just trying to keep the kids off the street really."

Mainstream media sees the 'hoodie' as the unofficial uniform for youth gangs. And gangs are also linked to weapons. According to the Chief Constable of British Transport Police, Ian Johnston, 46% of 15-17 year olds admitting to carrying knives for self defence.

Samsam agrees with the linked between gangs and weapons. "When you say the word 'gang' people just suspect that they have some kind of weapon on them."

But the fact is that people use weapons to protect themselves and Nataleigh says it doesn't need to be a knife. "You can get arrested if you have a nail file over six inches long. 'cos you can kill someone with it."

Jaclyn has seen what happens if you are found with a weapon at school. "There was a girl at my school who brought in a seven-inch nail file and she got excluded."

About this article

This article was written by Jaclyn Adu-Sarkode, 12, Nataleigh Taylor, 15, Alysha Lonergan, 11 and Samsam Farah, 15, from west London.

7 comments

ha

i agree gangs should be banned forever and ever and ever
shanitaa (age 19) from london, 04 October 2010 14:21

i agree with ali.

i agree with ali. i live on a rough

estate where everyone seems to be in a gang.

they get in to gangs cos they feel they need protection from whatever might be out there.

but on my estate there's nothing for them to do really so they hang around on the streets.

shana (age 17) from North London, 03 February 2010 14:54

i wrote a part of the article

hi this is alysha i have recognized that gangs can't be ban but we can help stop them .

alysha lonergan (age 13) from hammersmith, 22 October 2009 14:12

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