

The Tragedy of Youth Gangs in London

Headliners reporter Clio Russell-Bryant interviews a young person from West London about his past experiences in a gang to find out what it's like from a first-hand perspective.

Abdul, 19, lives in Shepherd's Bush and was part of a local gang. I asked him why he wanted to be in a gang and he said: "Because we were a group of friends and we wanted to make a name for ourselves, make money and get road (street) fame and respect. Also I didn't want to be pushed around; I wanted to call the shots"

I wondered why it is so important to have a name for yourself. Is it because you don't want to be classed as a nobody that people aren't scared of or a somebody that everybody knows and is scared of? I asked Abdul if he thought that belonging in a gang made people aware of who you were and he said: "Because when we would do stuff people would be like 'whoa it was them, they did it!' and then our name would build a reputation."

I've heard that people did all sorts to get money, fame and respect. I was wondering what Abdul's gang did; whether it was robbing people from another gang or simply just stealing stuff from shops. What he said was completely different to what I was thinking: "To get money we started off by robbing people. We would just go to different areas and rob people. To get respect, when there was parties in our area we would go terrorise it and it just sort of developed from there."

I wondered why people were scared of the gang Abdul was in. Was it because they carried weapons? Abdul said he carried weapons when: "I felt like I was in danger or I knew I was gonna do something."

I asked him what kind of weapons he carried around with him because I heard that it was very easy for gangs to get access to guns: "A lot of the time it was only knives that were involved but other times there was also guns involved and also when your in a circle that's already operating and doing bad, negative stuff it's not hard to find people who will give you weapons, it's very easy."

I wondered if the reason why they got access to these weapons so easily was maybe because the supplier was so scared of them because I would be if a whole group of boys came up to me asking me for a gun because how do I know that they are not going to kill me after because I know too much and I might go to the police. I found out that: "They probably wouldn't want to get into an argument with me because that would be pointless ... we're both more or less on the same side."

I also asked Abdul if the gangs in the UK are copying the culture of the American youths: "Yes that's happening but also it just happens like it's not even about copying. At the end of the day it just happens like if people want to protect themselves then it is common sense to use a knife because you know that it can hurt someone else so it's not always copying."

I decided to ask him if the whole postcode vs. postcode conflict was being influenced by the American culture of east coast vs. west coast: "No. I think that wherever you are from, like if you're from England and there's someone from Jamaica and there's a football match then you're just gonna support your side. So if you from W12 and someone's from E3, people from E3 aren't gonna be supporting W12 because E3 is their side."

I decided to ask Abdul why there is conflict between the youths: "Stupidity like everyone wants to be the hardest, everyone wants to be the person who don't want to back down and also people wanna make a name for themselves so this is what has to happen."

Gangs these days don't really know what they are fighting for. They are just doing it because they think that everyone else is doing it and they safe in a gang. Gang members need to realise that many boys their age don't live to see 21 because of being in a gang. In recent years a lot of teenagers have been murdered or stabbed due to being in a particular gang. Instead of thinking about a way to make some kind of truce or stop gang war they were talking about revenge. Teenagers need to know that we are the future.

The subject of this article has had his name changed.

About this story

This article was written by Clio Russell-Bryant, 16.

1 comment

Gangs

Never follow a fashion if it is not progressive. If you decide to congregate with your so called family or gang members, progress onto working together to better yourself and learn as much as you can for free. Third world countries don't give youths the opportunity that you have here. Peace live in it or rest in it. (Think) Dan from East London, 12 April 2010 13:10

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