

STREET GANGS: A Growing Dilemma

Gang Slang

Are you claiming? - Do you belong to a gang?

Bangin' - Actively involved in gang activity.

Cuz/Cuzz - Crip, Crips referring to other Crips.

Deuce and a half - .25 semi-automatic handgun.

Eight track - 2.5 grams of cocaine.

Five-0 - Police, police are coming.

G - Gangster, dark glasses.

Gat - Gun.

Hangin' - Not directly involved.

In the mix - Involved in gang activity.

Jumped in - Gang initiation usually involves jumping into a group of gang members and fighting them.

Kickin' it - Relaxing with fellow gang members, partying, killing time, relaxing.

Lizard butt - Ugly girl.

Mackin' - Getting girls.

Nine - 9mm semi-automatic handgun.

One time - Police/Sheriff are near.

Packing - Carrying a gun in your possession.

Queen - Female member of a gang.

Rag - Bandanna/handkerchief the color of the gang.

Saggin' - Wearing pants low on the hips, jail house life, gangstering.

The man - Cop.

Tagging - Wearing a hat with the manufacturer's tag exposed, applying graffiti.

Up on it - Have knowledge of drugs, in the know on the drug scene, a person who's successfully dealing drugs.

Violations - To break a gang rule and receive punishment.

We're down with the set - Mellow, fine, secure, OK.

Who you down with? - What gang set are you with?

YG - Young gangster.

Source: Omaha Police Department

Two-face

Continued from Page 1

His mother brought the family to Nebraska to live with Two-face's grandmother. The relocation kept him alive, but not out of trouble.

At age 12, he spent one day in the Attention Center on three counts of larceny. The next year, he was arrested for third-degree assault. He spent 16 hours and 11 minutes in the juvenile jail but was released to his mother.

As other kids play soccer and take piano lessons, Two-face's rap sheet continues to grow. He spent his 15th birthday — and 361 other days in 1993 — at the Attention Center.

He insisted he wasn't given the same opportunities as schoolmates and friends in Lincoln's Northside — friends he rarely saw because he was locked in the Attention Center.

"A lot of the white people don't have the worries that we do," he said. "Whites rap on society, you don't even see blacks in society."

Two-face's story is typical of how gangs spread throughout the country. When families flee ghettos filled with crime, little gangsters take over in smaller cities.

"When I first came down here, there wasn't any gangs here," he said. "I didn't see no one saggin'. I didn't see no one buying. Then all of a sudden, I hear people claiming what I'm claiming."

Lincoln police estimate that half of the more than 300 identified gang members are wannabes. The same boys who wear red on some days wear blue on another. A real 'G' is true to his colors, Two-face said.

"You can spot a wannabe and a true gangster," he said. "You've got to watch what they say. It's the way they perform, they don't carry themselves right."

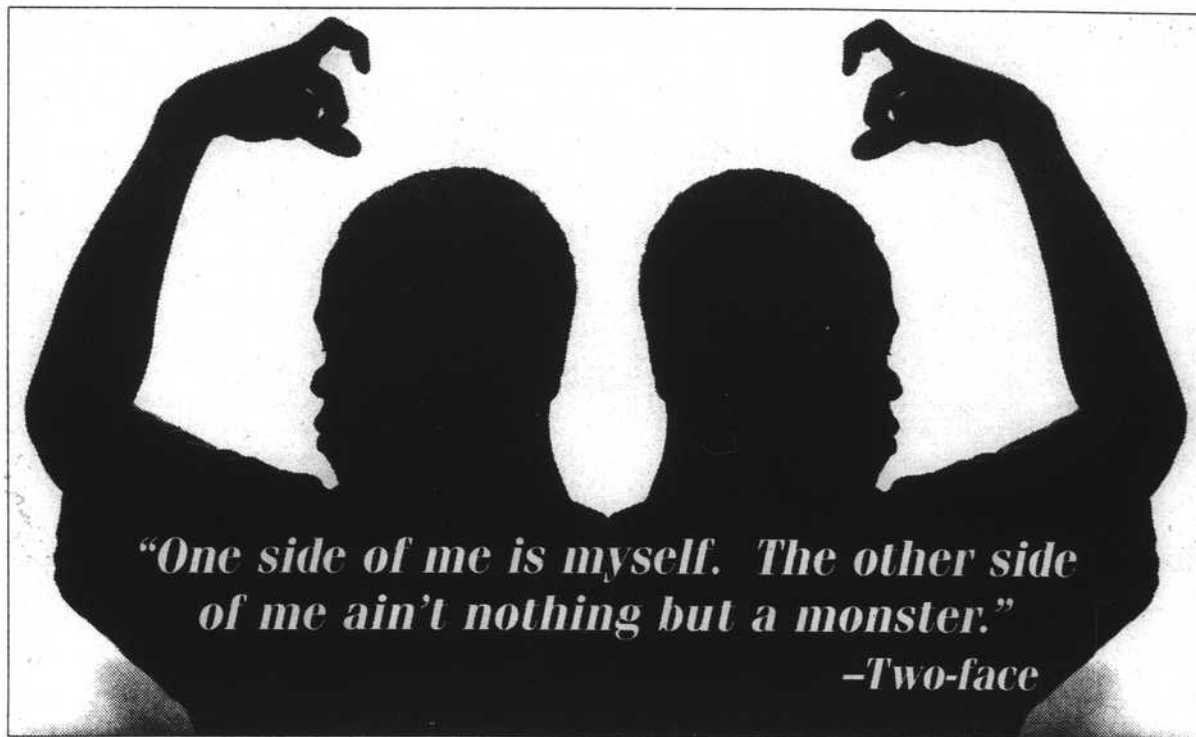
Two-face doesn't miss an opportunity to brag about his life. At 17, he has more worldly possessions than knowledge. When he was on the streets, he claims he had three cars: A Lincoln Continental, a Park Avenue and a Riviera.

"It's not cool to cruise in the same car day after day," he said.

A 17-year-old kid driving near 24th and W streets is suspicious enough, but when he alternates his car every other day, police wonder how he paid for the shiny rims and license plates.

"Police follow me everyday in my car. You've got a nice car with tinted windows and you're black, they'll pull you over."

Police don't hide the fact they stop cars more frequently on Lincoln's



Two-face says he has a dual personality. His nickname is explained in this photo illustration.

Northside. They say it is the simplest way to show their presence and regain control.

"Preventing gangs from joining a foothold is more effective than dealing with the problem after the fact," said Lincoln police Sgt. Larry Nelson, who tracks gang activity in the city.

Two-face says he has been pulled over for having a loose license plate. The officer told Two-face he was afraid it would fall off. But when the vehicle was pulled over, the officer visually searched for a gun, money or drugs, Two-face says.

But the police — those Two-face calls the "po-po" — say they are using aggressive policing approaches to clean up communities. When he's walking down the streets, Two-face tries to blend in with other teen-agers.

"I won't be buying real fancy clothes. The po-po will wonder where I got that from," Two-face said. "I didn't even get a pager."

That is where the gangster's modesty begins. When details are revealed about Two-face's life, he becomes more and more of a child. Cut through the repeated f-words and a lengthy juvenile record, a scared boy is discovered.

His gang brothers raised him while his mother was strung out on drugs. One day last month, Two-face composed a rap about his own demise. In graphic detail, he describes friends and families watching his funeral procession on a Monday morning at 10 o'clock.

"Today is the day that my blood gets spilled..."

TWO-FACE

"The Funeral" rap

The artistic side of Two-face is revealed as he performs his rap at the Attention Center. Holding a handwritten script covered with eraser marks and misspellings, Two-face puts his hand at his side, thumps a beat and does his rap: "The Funeral."

"Today is the day that my blood gets spilled..."

"Yeah I'm a G, but we was all born to die."

"So ain't no screaming, there really ain't no need to cry."

"So I give it up and quit trying to fight, and let death take my life as I float into the light."

"I never thought of people as my friends, but the nigger I grew up with is the fool that did me in. I guess he thought by killing me that he would get away, but my boys retaliate and our funeral's the same day."

"When I get to my destination in the sky, I hope the Lord will take time, to answer my one question: Why?"

"I try to get my shit straight with God before I bail, cause even as a 'G' I don't want to go to hell. And I know the Lord understands that, but it's still up to him where I end up at."

"I wish I could have told my mom I loved her for the last time..."

"Now I've done dropped some niggers, to me it's just another day. Now that is me, I see shit in a different way."

"All the years I looked for death, I guess I finally just found it. They caught me slippin' and life just goes on without me."

After his five-minute rap, Two-face is somber. He says he will try to bury his criminal side. After he serves his time, he says he will retire.

He is tired of the dingy apartments near 24th and W streets. Tired of being harassed by police. Tired of looking over his shoulder.

All of this weariness at age 17. "I'm going to slow down with the bangin' shit," he said. "I'm just waiting for my time to be an old 'G,' to sit on my ass, smoke bud and make money."

Life at the Attention Center will not last forever. He turns 18 in November 1996, when he will likely serve a few years — this time in a jail with barred windows — for robbery and previous charges.

"This is fun and games right here," Two-face says, looking around at pool tables, foosball and a basketball hoop. "This is a vacation away from trouble."

Different habits mark gangs

By Jeff Zeleny
Senior Reporter

Gangs are marked by colors, signs and directions.

The Bloods, who are members of the People Nation, wear their red hats, belts and rags to the left.

Crips, who are members of the Folk Nation, wear their blue hats, belts and rags to the right.

They roll up different pant legs, polish different fingernails and wrap different colored bandannas on their heads.

Although the characteristics seem similar, they could not be farther apart. A cross of these details could mean the difference between life and death on tough metropolitan streets.

Not in Lincoln.

"You can walk down any block you want to," said Two-face, a 17-year-old Crip who moved to Lincoln from California. "Here, the Vice Lords, Bloods and Crips walk down the same street. That wouldn't happen in Cali."

Police seen hints of more than 23 different gangs in Lincoln. The majority of the more than 300 self-admitted gang members come from Blood, Crip and Baggy Boy sets, said Lincoln police Sgt. Larry Nelson.

The gangs' habits are as distinctive as their colors.

Bloods and Vice Lords are likely

to wear team jackets from the L.A. Kings, Chicago Bulls, Boston Celtics, Green Bay Packers, Washington Redskins and Minnesota Timberwolves, said Officer Sharri Fletcher of the Omaha Police Gang Unit.

Crips and Disciples typically wear L.A. Raiders, Los Angeles Dodgers and Pittsburgh Steelers team gear, Fletcher said.

"How do you tell if a kid is gang-bangin' or just a big fan?" Fletcher said. "Ask him who his favorite players on the team are."

Tatoos are found on any part of the body. A teardrop painted on a youth's cheek, could indicate a fellow gangster died, Fletcher said. The teardrop also can be painted on an "enforcer," or a gang member who has killed someone, she said.

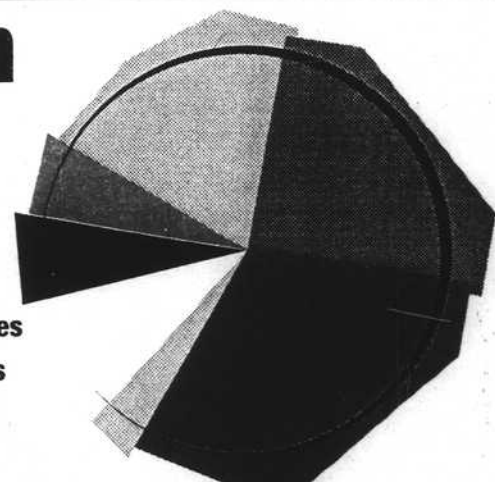
Local gangs, like the Baggy Boys, don't have as many rituals. Police say they aren't as organized or particular.

They, too, often wear blue baggy clothing with pagers clipped on pockets. Their low-riding imported cars with tinted windows are probably the most distinctive feature of this gang, police say.

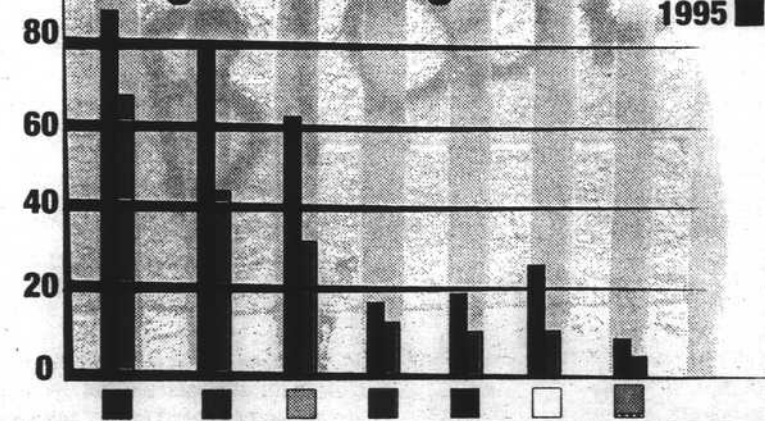
"In our opinion, they commit crimes together," said Lincoln police Detective Sgt. Jim Breen. "It doesn't have the hierarchical leadership positions that other gangs do."

Lincoln gangs

- Baggy Boys
- Crips
- Bloods
- Gangster Disciples
- Insane Vice lords
- Green Bay Mafia
- Crenshaw Mafia



Gang member growth 1994 1995



Source: Lincoln Police Department