
Latino Gang Charged With Racial Cleansing Attacks in California Town

By **CHRISTINA NG** June 9, 2011



WATCH | California Gang Ran 'Campaign of Hate' Against Blacks

A Latino gang accused of attempting a racial cleansing of African Americans in Azusa, Calif., has been indicted for a federal rights conspiracy, according to the U.S. Attorney's office.

Prior federal cases involving street gangs have included racial violence allegations, but this indictment is only the second time in history that federal civil rights laws have been used against members of a criminal street gang.

"Azusa 13 waged a campaign of hate against African Americans—a two-decade crime spree in which African-Americans were harassed and attacked," said Andre Birotte Jr., the U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California.

A federal grand jury issued a 24-count indictment last week that charges the 51 defendants with a broad range of crimes including extortion, robbery and murder.

The three-year investigation of the [Varrio Azusa 13](#) gang culminated this week in an early morning raid involving almost 400 law enforcement officials. Azusa is a city of 45,000 people located about 30 minutes northeast of Los Angeles. Only 3 percent of this population is African



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The gang has about 400 members with 50 indicted yesterday. According to the indictment, 23 are already in custody and 12 fugitives are still being sought.

The number 13 attached to the name of many gangs in Southern California indicates a connection to the Mexican Mafia, the prison gang that controls Azusa 13. "M" is the 13th letter in the alphabet.

According to U.S. Attorney Birotte, the Mexican Mafia gets a slice of the Azusa gang's profits from drug sales. In exchange, the Mexican Mafia allows them to maintain control of their territory and protects them within the prison system.

The Azusa raid is the most recent attempt in Southern California to control tension between Hispanic gangs and African Americans.

In 2009, over 140 members of the Varrrio Hawaiian Gardens gang were charged for racially-driven crimes, and in 2007 members of two other gangs in the Los Angeles area were arrested for racial hate crimes.

According to Operation Safe Streets, a branch of the Los Angeles Sheriff's office, there are 1,100 documented gangs in Los Angeles County.

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"This is all part of gang culture," said Sgt. Byron Wainie of the OSS. He says that the violence is "sometimes on racial lines, sometimes based on geographic lines and sometimes narcotics related."

Jorge Luis Martinez, Detective Supervisor at the Gangs and Narcotics Division of the Los Angeles Police Department, agrees that the racial issue is one of many. "There is a rash of gangs that sometimes commit completely racial crimes, but it's much less than gang-on-gang crimes," Martinez said.

Most of the gang members indicted this week are facing possible prison sentences of at least 10 years if convicted.

"This gang has waged an insidious two decade campaign of violence fueled not only buy drug dealing, but also by racial hatred," Birotte said, "We hope that this case will signal an end to all this behavior and will help vindicate all of the victims who have suffered over the years."



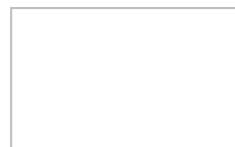
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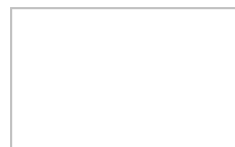
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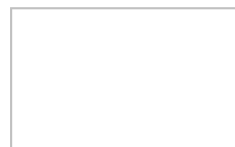
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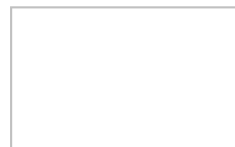
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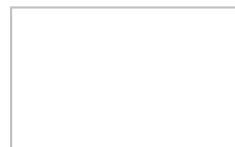
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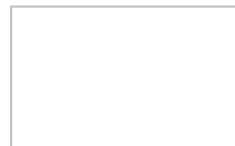
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