

I have no doubt that the deterioration of ethnic relations in L.A. and elsewhere is an integral part of this government's "depopulation" conspiracy. We must fight hard against this absurd division and promote black/brown unity in earnest. Recall, Tookie Williams was executed rather than be allowed to continue his incredibly effective moves to promote peace and unity among gangs. We will never win our liberation without the full cooperation and participation of all oppressed peoples, esp. those of color.

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A City's Violence Feeds on Black-Hispanic Rivalry

By [RANDAL C. ARCHIBOLD](#)

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 16 — The Latino gang members were looking for a black person, any black person, to shoot, the police said, and they found one. Cheryl Green, perched near her scooter chatting with friends, was shot dead in a spray of bullets that left several other young people injured.

She was 14, an eighth grader who loved junk food and watching Court TV with her mother and had recently written a poem beginning: "I am black and beautiful. I wonder how I will be living in the future."

"I never thought something like this could happen here in L.A.," said her mother, Charlene Lovett, fighting tears.

Cheryl's killing last month, which the police said followed a confrontation between the gang members and a black man, stands out in a wave of bias-related attacks and incidents in a city that promotes its diversity as much as frets over it.

Ethnic and racial tension comes to Los Angeles as regularly as the Santa Ana winds. Race-related fights afflict school campuses and jails, and two major riots, in 1965 and 1992, are hardly forgotten. But civil rights advocates say that the violence grew at an alarming rate last year, continuing a trend of more Latino versus black confrontations and prompting street demonstrations and long discussions on talk-radio programs and in community meetings.

Much of the violence springs from rivalries between black and Latino gangs, especially in neighborhoods where the black population has been declining and the Latino population surging. A 14 percent increase in gang crime last year, at a time when overall violent crime was down, has been attributed in good measure to the interracial conflict.

This month, the authorities reported that crimes in the city motivated by racial, religious or sexual orientation discrimination had increased 34 percent in 2005 over the previous year. Statistics for 2006 have not yet been compiled.

Rabbi Allen Freehling, executive director of the Los Angeles Human Relations Commission, a group created after the 1965 riots, said the recent growth in hate crimes reflected a failure by government and community leaders to prepare residents for socioeconomic changes in many neighborhoods, and therefore people have a tendency to lash out, out of desperation.

In November, three Latino gang members received sentences of life in federal prison for crimes that included the murder of two black men — one waiting for a bus, another searching for a parking spot — and assaults on others in a conspiracy to intimidate black residents of a northeast Los Angeles

neighborhood.

In another case, a twist on past racial dramas, 10 black youths, some of whom prosecutors say had connections to a gang, are on trial for what prosecutors contend was a racially motivated attack in neighboring Long Beach on three young white women who were visiting a haunted house on Halloween. Long Beach also experienced an increase in hate crimes in 2005.

But even with the alarm caused by the recent increase in bias crimes, Constance L. Rice, a veteran civil rights lawyer, said that, considering Los Angeles's diversity, race relations remained relatively calm and were even marked by many examples of groups getting along.

Still, in several corners of the city, particularly where poverty is high and demographics are shifting, tensions have been flaring.

"You don't find entire segments of the city against one another," Ms. Rice said, "but in the hot spots and areas of friction you find it is because the demographics are in transition and there is an assertion of power by one group or the other and you get friction."

In Harbor Gateway, the neighborhood where Cheryl Green was killed, tension had grown so severe that blacks and Latinos formed a dividing line on a street that both sides understood never to cross and a small market was unofficially declared off-limits to blacks. Ms. Lovett had warned her children not to go near the line, 206th Street, but Cheryl had ridden her scooter near it to talk to friends when she was shot.

Neighbors said the dominant 204th Street gang, which is Latino, had harassed blacks and Latinos alike and effectively kept the groups divided, though language and cultural differences also have contributed to segregation.

"We wave hello, but I cannot really talk to blacks because my English is limited and I don't want to mess with the gang," said Armando Lopez, speaking in Spanish, who lives near where Cheryl was shot.

A man who described himself as a former member of the 204th Street gang said black gang members had shot or assaulted Latinos, too, and explained the violence as a deadly tit-for-tat.

"They shot a Mexican guy right around the corner from here and nobody protested or said anything," said the man, who asked that his name not be used for fear of retaliation. He referred to neighborhood speculation that Cheryl's killing was in retaliation for the killing of Arturo Mercado, a Latino shot to death in the neighborhood a week before Cheryl in what the police call an unexplained shooting.

The violence in that neighborhood and others has prompted a flurry of announcements by Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa and police officials promising a renewed crackdown on gangs, particularly those responsible for hate-related crimes. Mr. Villaraigosa plans to meet Friday with [Robert S. Mueller III](#), the director of the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#), about expanding its assistance in investigating gang and hate-related violence; the agency has been working with the police on such investigations in the San Fernando Valley, where gang violence has increased the most.

Chief [William J. Bratton](#) has said the Police Department would soon issue a most-wanted list of the city's 10 to 20 worst gangs, with those most active in hate crimes likely to land on it.

"It's to say, 'We're coming after you,'" Mr. Bratton said.

A city-financed report by Ms. Rice released Friday said Los Angeles needed a "Marshall plan" to

address gang violence in light of a growth in gang membership and a lack of a comprehensive strategy to curb the problem.

Despite the spike in hate crimes in 2005, the total number of bias-related incidents in Los Angeles, 333 in a city of 3.8 million people, was down from peaks in violent crime in the mid-1990s and just after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Cheryl Green's killing particularly alarmed community and civil rights advocates because of her age and the indication that the neighborhood's long history of racial violence was continuing. Two Latino gang members have been charged with murder in the case. With the district attorney having filed a formal allegation that the men were motivated by hate, they could be eligible for the death penalty or life in prison without parole if convicted.

Mr. Villaraigosa, the city's first Latino mayor in over a century, was elected in 2005 in part on a promise of keeping peace among racial and ethnic groups. He attended a rally in the Harbor Gateway neighborhood Saturday, one of a few demonstrations calling for unity. He hugged Ms. Lovett and Beatriz Villa, the sister-in-law of Mr. Mercado, the Latino killed earlier.

"Our cultural and ethnic diversity are cornerstones of a strong L.A.," the mayor said Friday, "and violent crime motivated by the victim's skin color will not be tolerated."

Earl Ofari Hutchinson, an African-American syndicated columnist who plays host to the Los Angeles Urban Policy Roundtable, a weekly gathering in the Leimert Park neighborhood of South Los Angeles, said blacks complained that illegal Latin American immigrants were stealing jobs. Latinos, particularly newcomers unaccustomed to living among large numbers of African-Americans, in turn accuse blacks of criminal activity and harassing them.

"I think L.A. is a microcosm of what could happen in big cities in the future," Mr. Hutchinson said. "When we have the kind of tension you see in L.A. in the schools, the workplace and now hate-crime violence, my great concern is this is a horrific view of what could happen in other cities."

Ms. Lovett, Cheryl's mother, said the family moved to Harbor Gateway six years ago to get away from a high-crime neighborhood in another part of Los Angeles. A relative of a black neighbor was shot by the gang a few years ago, she said, and recently she had begun looking for a safer area.

"I feel it is unfortunate my daughter had to be the sacrificial lamb," she said. "But I just hope there is a change in this neighborhood."
