



The Bandana Republic: A Literary Anthology by Gang Members and Their Affiliates

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Urban youth gangs are typically viewed as no more than training grounds for thugs and felons. This breakthrough anthology presents a far different picture, revealing present and former gang members' and street activists' artistic impulses, emotional sensitivities, political beliefs, and capacities to assess the social conditions that created them. *The Bandana Republic* contains powerful writing: fiction and essays, poetry, and polemics written by adolescents from gangs like the Crips and Bloods and the Mexican Mafia. There's also creative work by ex-gangbangers who have become activists, artists, musicians, and movie stars. J. Sheeler's "Seven Immortals" finds grim poetry in a young girl's gang initiation. Jaha Zainabu's "The Jungle (Blood Territory)" is a lacerating portrait of an L.A. Blood. Commander's "The Brothas Gunnin'" piercingly profiles a neighborhood — and a world — under siege. These writings give voice to an American subculture far richer and more complex than the headlines indicate.

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