

# Gang Violence An Epidemic In Los Angeles According To Researcher

MIAMI BEACH, Fla - Gang violence has reached epidemic proportions and represents a major public health problem in Los Angeles where 43 percent of all homicides last year were

gang-related, a researcher said Tuesday. A study of violence in Los Angeles County during the 16-year period between 1979 and 1994 indicates 26.7 percent of

the more than 27,000 murders in that time were gang-related. The research was presented Tuesday at the American Medical Association's 14th annual Science Reporters

Conference in Miami Beach. The proportion of the county's homicides that resulted from gang activity rose dramatically, from 18.1 percent in 1979 to 43 percent in 1994, said Dr. Deirdre

Anglin, an emergency department physician at Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center.

"The majority of gang-related homicides are happening in communities where there are violent street gangs," Anglin said. "That puts everyone who lives in those communities, or plays or works in those communities, or even drives through those communities at higher risk."

The study found that of the 27,302 homicides in Los Angeles County from 1979-94, 7,288 were gang-related. Almost 40 percent of gang-related killing

victims were children or adolescents. Among the most striking revelations of the study, Anglin said, were statistics showing 93 percent of gang victims were African-American or Hispanic. When the age group 0-19 was considered, that figure rose to 96 percent, she said.

One-third of all gang-related killing victims are not members of violent street gangs, the research showed, an indication that everyone in Los Angeles is at risk. The study also found an increase in the use of firearms in gang-related violence.

# Marijuana Use Up Sharply Among US Youths

WASHINGTON - American teenagers are smoking marijuana at nearly twice the rate they did three years ago, according to a government survey.

But the study also found that illicit drug use among all Americans remained at the same level in 1994 as it was in 1992 after more than a decade of decline from the peak year of 1979. Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole is using the study to fire a salvo at the Clinton

administration. Dole said the Clinton administration has done little to fight illegal drug use during that time. He charges the administration "sat on the sidelines, transforming the war on drugs into a full-scale retreat."

But the White House is using the numbers in the study to blast Republican attempts to slash government spending on anti-drug programs.

The 1994 National Household Survey on Drug

Abuse said marijuana use among 12-17 year olds nearly doubled from 1992 to 1994, though it was well below the peak reached in 1979. Marijuana use among adolescents had been on a steady decline through the 1980s.

The survey found that 7.3

percent of 12-17 year olds reported using marijuana monthly, up from four percent in 1992 and that only about 40 percent of adolescents believe occasional use of the drug is dangerous, down from over half those polled five years ago.

(See Marijuana Use, Page 10)



**U.S. Mint Director Philip N. Diehl presents a commemorative Joe Louis medal to former heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali. Diehl was joined by Mint consultant Lavonia Perryman.**

# Medals Honor Black Americans

(NU) - The U.S. Mint has launched a Coin Awareness Program to attract new collectors.

The first product in its new initiative are commemorative medals that honor five prominent African Americans: opera singer Marian Anderson; General Colin Powell, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Roy Wilkins, former head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; heavyweight boxer Joe Louis; and Olympic runner Jesse Owens.

The bronze medals are duplicates of gold medals awarded by Congress to these five individuals or their families, and are part of the Mint's African American Heroes Collection.

Honoring these African Americans as a part of the CAP continues a century-old tradition for the U.S. Mint. "We've produced medals honoring African Americans dating back to the Civil War era," says Mint Director Philip N. Diehl. "The CAP Program brings more recognition to that aspect of the Mint's history as well as to achievements of African Americans whom Congress has honored."

The coins are already available for sale. The national sales kickoff was held

in July at the 25th anniversary of the Indiana Black Expo in Indianapolis.

Timed to coincide with the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, the Jesse Owens medal is combined with a silver dollar commemorating the Olympic track and field sports. The two-medal Persian Gulf set highlights General Powell's leadership in the Persian Gulf War.

The 1.5-inch bronze medals for Powell, Wilkins, Louis and Owens are presented in contemporary CD-style packaging with certificates of authenticity and biographical sketches. The 3-inch medal honoring Marian Anderson can be purchased along with a deluxe velvet presentation case.

The Mint's longstanding issues of commemorative coins for two other African Americans are the 1946 coin for educator Booker T. Washington and the 1951 coin for legendary scientist Dr. George Washington Carver.

Future plans include a 1998 coin honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which has been recommended by the Citizens Commemorative Coin Advisory Committee.

For information about the U.S. Mint's Coin Awareness Program and its African American Heroes Collection, call 202-283-COIN.

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