

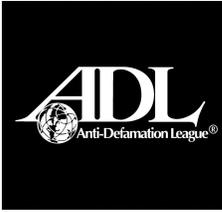


THE ARYAN CIRCLE

Crime in the Name of Hate

December 2009





THE ARYAN CIRCLE: Crime in the Name of Hate

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

- 1 Introduction: Officers Killed in Bastrop
- 2 The Aryan Circle and Racist Prison Gangs
- 3 Origins
- 4 Size and Membership
- 5 Organization
- 6 Control and Power Issues
- 7 Recruitment and Prospecting
- 8 Demographics
- 9 The Role of Women in the Aryan Circle
- 10 From the Prisons to the Streets
- 11 Ideology and Group Solidarity
- 12 Relationships with Other Groups
- 13 Drug Use and the Aryan Circle
- 14 Aryan Circle Criminal Activity
 - a. Organized Crime: Profit
 - b. Organized Crime: Other Violence
 - c. Hate Crimes

Appendix: Aryan Circle Identifiers & Tattoos

THE ARYAN CIRCLE: CRIME IN THE NAME OF HATE

Executive Summary

The Aryan Circle is a large, growing and dangerous white supremacist gang based primarily in Texas. Active in prisons and on the streets, it has a long track record of murder, including the deaths of two police officers in Bastrop, Louisiana, in 2007.

- The Aryan Circle originated in the Texas prison system in the mid-1980s and is now the second largest white supremacist gang in Texas.
- The Aryan Circle has four segments: its Texas prison population, its federal prison population, its out-of-state prison population, and its non-incarcerated population. Total membership is probably over 1,400, making it one of the largest white supremacist groups in the United States. The most disturbing trend is the growth in its free-world membership.
- The Aryan Circle is headed by an elected president and run by senior members. Billy "Thumper" Haynes was elected the Circle's new president in 2008, but many Circle members fought the choice. In mid-2009, he was replaced by Greg "Droopy" Freeman.
- The Aryan Circle recruits in prisons and on the streets. Members tend to come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds; many members work in the oil industry. The Aryan Circle is unusual in that women can become members. Some women have achieved positions of considerable responsibility, but sexism makes it difficult for them to rise to the highest ranks.
- The original "homegrown" white supremacy of the Aryan Circle has become more sophisticated. However, many Circle members still have only a crude understanding of white supremacist ideology. The Circle uses white supremacy to increase group solidarity.
- The Aryan Circle has few relationships with "traditional" white supremacist groups. Its relations with other prison gangs are often violent; the Aryan Circle has been involved in a number of prison gang wars.
- The Aryan Circle not only deals drugs; many members abuse drugs, especially methamphetamine. Efforts by Circle leaders to combat drug use by members have failed. A new effort started in 2008 faces serious hurdles.
- Much of the Aryan Circle's criminal activities are profit-driven. Inside prisons, the smuggling of contraband (particularly drugs and tobacco) is the most important endeavor. Outside prison walls, Circle members engage in drug trafficking and a variety of theft and robbery rings.
- Organized violence is also a feature of Aryan Circle activity, including killing suspected informants and engaging in violence against rival gangs. Aryan Circle members have also committed hate crimes, in and out of prisons.

I. Officers Killed in Bastrop

It started and ended with murders. The first murders occurred on July 14, 2007, after a pick-up truck parked in front of an east Houston house occupied by Dennis Clem and his longtime girlfriend, Tanya Smith. An argument ensued between the occupants of the truck and people in the front yard of the house. It is possible that the encounter was drug-related.

According to Clem's brother, who was a witness, Smith came outside and began yelling at the two teenagers to leave, shouting racial epithets. When a person in the yard approached the truck, one of the men in the truck shot at him, wounding him. Shortly thereafter, Clem burst out of the house with an AK-47 and opened fire, killing two teenage passengers in the truck.

The wielder of the assault rifle, Dennis "Bigboy" Clem, was not just anybody. He was a member of the Aryan Circle, a large and violent racist prison gang active throughout Texas and in many other states. And he wasn't just any member, but one of the group's inner circle, close to people such as Billy Wayne Haynes, soon to be the Circle's next leader, and Haynes' fiancée, Summer Heinz, also a member. He was well-liked by other Circle members, and respected for his tattooing abilities. Tanya "Little Feather" Smith was also a member of the Aryan Circle.

After the shootings, Clem and Smith hid out with local Circle friends, giving some of them tattoos to pass the time. After a few weeks, fearing capture, they fled across state lines on August 5 to Bastrop, Louisiana, where a cell of Aryan Circle members could hide them. They took with them a mini-arsenal of weapons, including handguns, a sawed-off shotgun, and an SKS assault rifle, as well as large amounts of ammunition. They also took white supremacist flags, patches, and clothing. Clem brought along his tattooing tools.

In Bastrop, they met local Aryan Circle members Donald Brendle and Chrystal Harrell. After spending their first night at Harrell's home, Clem and Smith moved to a downtown motel room, registered by Brendle under his own name. However, Brendle himself was under suspicion by the Bastrop Police Department in a theft case. On August 10, a relative of Brendle's told police that Brendle might be at the motel room.

That afternoon, Bastrop Police Detectives Chuck Wilson and John Smith showed up at the motel, thinking they could question Brendle there. They had no idea that two desperate and well-armed fugitives were in the room instead of their suspect.

When they knocked on the door, Tanya Smith answered and let them in. A motel security camera revealed that, shortly thereafter, the two detectives fled the hotel room, both wounded, guns still in holsters. Clem followed, a gun in each hand, shooting at the detectives until they fell to the ground, dead. John Smith was hit six times in total, Wilson twice.

Tanya Smith left the hotel room, walked across the parking lot, and told the motel manager to dial 911. She then fled the scene. Another local Aryan Circle member, Chrystal Harrell, helped her get out of Bastrop.

Because both the Bastrop Police Department and the local Sheriff's office were located nearby, additional police were quick to respond to the shootout. As police arrived at the scene just a few minutes later, a second shootout occurred, in which Clem wounded two emergency technicians before being killed by police.

The lone survivor of the initial shootout, Tanya Smith, fled back to Houston, but law enforcement officers there were on the alert and she was arrested two days later at a mobile home park frequented by Aryan Circle members. Smith was convicted in January 2009 on federal weapons charges and given a 27-year sentence. In February, she was tried in Louisiana on second degree murder and drug charges and convicted on all counts; in April she received two consecutive life sentences, as well as concurrent sentences on other charges.

As news of Clem's death spread, Aryan Circle members reacted in a variety of ways. One member asked for prayers for Clem (and other Circle members who had recently died), calling them "soldiers for our cause and good men." A Houston area member proclaimed in an Aryan Circle newsletter that "Dennis Clem is home in the Heavens." Summer Heinz had a memento of Clem on her own body, a tattoo he did for her a week before the shootout. "My best friend did it," she told someone who complimented her on the tattoo, "7 days before he was in a shootout with 2 cops and killed them but died too...It means a lot to me."

In just a little over a year, Heinz herself would be arrested in connection with another murder. Murder has a way of following the Aryan Circle.

II. The Aryan Circle and Racist Prison Gangs

- The Aryan Circle is a white supremacist prison gang, but its white supremacy often takes a backseat to traditional criminal motives.
- It uses its white supremacy as a bond to cement the loyalty of individual members to the group, creating an extended Aryan crime family.

The Aryan Circle is a white supremacist prison gang. As such, it shares characteristics common to white supremacist groups as well as traits common to other prison gangs. This dual nature makes the Aryan Circle significantly different from more traditional white supremacist groups, such as neo-Nazi or Ku Klux Klan groups, in a number of ways:

1) Criminal motives vs. ideological motives. Prison gangs are organized crime groups. One of the major reasons they exist is to facilitate the commission of criminal acts for monetary gain. The Aryan Circle is typical in this regard; its members engage in a variety of criminal acts in and out of prisons. However, it also has white supremacist motives and, in different ways, including violence, tries to advance the cause of white supremacy.

The Circle is also typical in that ideological motives usually take a back seat to its more traditional criminal activities. The Circle's sometime rival, the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas,

rationalized this conflict by stating that it can sometimes be a “hindrance” to put its ideological beliefs before its “business transaction(s),” and that the group has to generate income to allow it to continue to further its “mission and growth.” The Circle has not stated its position so explicitly, but has a similar attitude.

2) Levels of ideological sophistication. Racist prison gangs evolved separately from other white supremacist groups in the United States. The first such gangs, like the original Aryan Brotherhood, created a crude, homegrown form of white supremacy. Over the decades, racist prison gangs tended to become more aware of “mainstream” white supremacist ideology, and to incorporate it into their own beliefs, but there is still a large difference between the ideological sophistication of a typical racist prison gang and that of a typical neo-Nazi or Ku Klux Klan group. The main difference is that racist prison gang members exhibit a much broader range of ideological indoctrination — one that runs from very crude racism to a much greater knowledge of white supremacist concepts and philosophies. While some Aryan Circle members are quite conversant with white supremacist concepts such as the Fourteen Words (“We must secure the existence of our race and a future for white children”), as well as prominent white supremacist figures such as Robert Mathews or William Pierce, other members might be completely ignorant of such matters. The more ideologically inclined members of the Aryan Circle often spend a great deal of energy trying to “educate” their less informed brothers and sisters.

3) Deliberate clannishness. The large size of organized crime groups, compared to other criminals, is both their greatest strength and their greatest weakness. While their size and structure allow them to engage in more and larger criminal acts, any member who confesses to the authorities puts the entire group at risk. Most organized crime groups have evolved strategies designed to reduce this risk by emphasizing the need for members to put the good of the group above that of the individual. The Mafia, for example, focused on the notion of “families,” with shared ethnic and geographical backgrounds, and strengthened these bonds by creating a series of rituals and customs. The Aryan Circle is similar in that its survival strategy is also to create a sense of family: to create, as some members refer to the Circle, an “Aryan family.”

Their shared racist ideology strengthens this feeling of clannishness, while Aryan Circle stalwarts constantly work to instill a sense of family among its members, referring to each other as “bro” and “sis,” even sometimes spending holidays together like real family members would. One female Aryan Circle member from Laguna Park, Maria Vaught, wrote a letter of appreciation to an Aryan Circle newsletter in early 2008 after other members helped to bail her out of jail following a 2007 arrest. Vaught said, “I love you all so much. The love that was shown to me during that time was phenomenal. I’ve never in my life known that kind of true love and it felt so good and still does...My brothers and sisters, you are all fantastic and there are none like you in the whole world. I sit in awe so much of the time at how wonderful this family is. I love being a Diamond [a term Circle members use to refer to themselves because of the shape of their tattoo] and I love all of you.” This attitude is typical.

4) Prison gang subculture. Finally, being part of the white prison gang subculture further distinguishes the Aryan Circle from other types of white supremacist groups. The white prison gang subculture has its own language, its own rituals and customs, its own shared experiences. Adherents refer to themselves as “peckerwoods” and “featherwoods,” or collectively as the

“woodpile.” Most members have been to prison (or soon will be there), while many female Circle members and associates have the shared experiences of trying to raise a family while a male partner is imprisoned. Many of these cultural concepts and experiences are alien to other white supremacists, creating a cultural divide. It is common for “traditional” white supremacists to look down on members of racist prison gangs.

III. Aryan Circle Origins

- The Aryan Circle was founded in 1985, making it one of the older racist prison gangs in existence.
- For many years it was a small group, but began to expand in the 1990s. In 2009, it is the second largest white supremacist gang in the Texas prison system.

The Aryan Circle was founded in 1985 by Mark “Cowboy” Gaspard and other early members. According to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), the group emerged during a period of internal turmoil within the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas (ABT); its original membership contained several ex-ABT members as well as others rejected for ABT membership.

The Circle’s own explanation is not very different. It claims in its member handbook that the Circle was established “by a group of men who were fed up with other organizations within the system who claimed to be for the White race but were in reality nothing more than radical prison gangs.” According to one Aryan Circle member, the group was originally called the Aryan Christians, but later changed its name because not all of its members were Christian.

The Aryan Circle was small for some time, but made a name for itself within the Texas prison system in the 1990s, largely through violent conflicts with other gangs, white and non-white alike, from the Mexican Mafia to the ABT. This allowed the Circle to grow. The TDCJ was slow to realize the threat posed by the Circle, despite a number of murders and assaults by Circle members. Some of the gang wars were so intense that prisons had to be put in “lockdown” status by prison officials.

In 1997, Aryan Circle members in the Connally Unit violently assaulted another inmate for “snitching;” two years later, a jury awarded more than \$1 million in damages to the inmate, because prison officials had failed to respond to the prisoner’s requests for protection from the Circle. Also in 1997, a number of Aryan Circle members in the Terrell Unit murdered Ryan Osgood, a member of the rival White Knights gang, following several earlier confrontations between members of the group. It was not until 1999, in the wake of the Osgood murder, that the TDCJ finally declared the Aryan Circle a security threat group (one of only 12 recognized by the TDCJ), nearly a decade and a half after its founding.

Gaspard was the long time head of the Circle, even proclaiming his status in a letter to Playboy Magazine, but stepped down in the 2000s, a move that disgruntled a number of members. In recent years, there have been several heads of the Aryan Circle, as well as serious leadership struggles.

After more than twenty years of existence, Aryan Circle members are proud of the growth of their racist and anti-Semitic gang. "Since 1985," wrote Circle member Rodney Holt in a late 2008 newsletter, "this family has grown from a peckerwood prison gang to a mass, well-structured organization, inside and out (of prison walls)."

IV. Aryan Circle Size and Membership

- Aryan Circle membership is divided into four areas:
 - 1) its Texas prison population
 - 2) its federal prison population
 - 3) its out-of-state prison population
 - 4) its free world population.
- The total membership is probably over 1,400, making it one of the largest white supremacist groups in the country.
- The most disturbing trend is the rapid growth in its free-world membership, which has resulted in an epidemic of criminal activity across Texas and beyond.

Estimating the size of the Aryan Circle is difficult due to its secretive nature, as well as its presence both in prisons and on the streets. The Circle is one of the largest white supremacist groups in the United States. It is based primarily in Texas, though it has an operational presence in most surrounding states, and individual members and cells across the country. Because the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) classifies the Aryan Circle as a security threat group, it tries to track Circle membership within Texas prisons. In the early 2000s, TDCJ figures reported 500-600 confirmed/validated Aryan Circle members within the state prison system, but this number has risen. The spring 2008 figures report 730 confirmed/validated Aryan Circle members in the Texas state prison system. However, at any given time, the TDCJ is usually also monitoring hundreds of additional offenders for possible Aryan Circle associations. An unknown additional number of Aryan Circle members, mostly those awaiting trial on various charges, are incarcerated in county jails across Texas.

Outside Texas, Circle members are incarcerated in a variety of other state prison systems, but usually in small enough numbers that they cannot act in an organized capacity. There are Aryan Circle members in the Indiana prison system, for example, but only in some facilities, and not enough to organize into groups. Similarly, in Wisconsin, there are dispersed Circle members in different institutions, but not in numbers great enough to present major problems. In other state systems, including Colorado and North Carolina, there is a greater Aryan Circle presence. Some state groups even have their own tattoo or "patch."

The federal prison system currently has more than 150 validated Aryan Circle members in its institutions. These prisoners are scattered around the country, but the largest number of them seem to be concentrated in three southwestern federal correctional institutions: FCI Three Rivers in Texas, FCI El Reno in Oklahoma, and FCC Forrest City in Arkansas. One Mississippi Aryan

Brotherhood member recently incarcerated in a federal prison was impressed by their presence, writing "I must give the Circle MAJOR RESPECT. Ya'll are a MAJOR FORCE for the fed sys, and ya'll really have ya'lls shit together."

The federal system is also one way the Circle has expanded to new parts of the country. One El Reno Circle member claimed that the prison was a "breeding ground" for the group. "Back in the day," he wrote in an Aryan Circle newsletter, "you very seldom ran into a brother that wasn't from Texas or Carolina [where the Aryan Circle founder had connections]. Now we are all over!" In a March 2008 newsletter, a Circle member from Missouri who would shortly be getting out of prison talked about his plans to spread the Circle in his home state: "We have a lot of white people in Missouri. I would like to take advantage of it and really expand this family and make some good things happen!"

Aryan Circle members can show up in different prisons due to a variety of circumstances; for example, after Hurricane Rita hit the Texas coast in 2005, a number of jails and prisons had to be evacuated, and some Aryan Circle members ended up in prisons as far away as Missouri as a result. More routinely, Aryan Circle members first arrived in Wisconsin after that state accepted an out of state prisoner contract with Texas.

As of summer 2009, the Aryan Circle out-of-state hierarchy had organized five regions, each composed of one or more prison systems in which the Circle was active. Regions One and Two both consisted of several Arkansas prisons each, suggesting a significant Circle presence in Arkansas. Region Three includes Tennessee and Louisiana; Region Four includes Oklahoma, Missouri and Oregon; and Region Five includes Wisconsin and Indiana. Though there are Circle prisoners in other states, these are probably the states where the Circle presence is best organized.

Of course, the Circle is not active only in prisons; increasingly, it has become active on the streets as well. Street members include Circle members released from prison, some recruits who have not yet been incarcerated, and many female Circle members (who are somewhat less likely to be incarcerated than male members). The growth in the use of methamphetamines in Texas probably contributed to the street growth of the Aryan Circle.

The extent of Circle street membership is difficult to determine because of its secretive nature; however, since 2007, ADL has been able to identify more than 150 different Aryan Circle street members and associates (in this context, "associates" include mostly women who are involved to some degree with the group but may not be formal members), with dozens of additional probable but unconfirmed members. This suggests that the actual number of street members at any given time is likely to be in the hundreds.

Aryan Circle street members are concentrated overwhelmingly in Texas. Of the 150 or so members identified by ADL, the bulk follow the north-south I-35 corridor through the state, with concentrations in San Antonio, Austin/Round Rock, Waco, and Dallas/Ft. Worth. Additional significant concentrations include the Houston/Harris County and Odessa/Midland (where Circle membership recovered following mass arrests several years ago) areas, with a smaller concentration around San Angelo. Other Aryan Circle members are scattered in a variety of cities and towns around the state.

Outside Texas, street membership is concentrated mostly in nearby states such as Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana, but members have been identified as far away as Tennessee, Montana, New Jersey, and Michigan, the latter where a small cell was recently started by a Circle member originally from the Odessa/Midland area. One of high ranking Circle members, Thomas "TJ" Campion, lives in North Liberty, Indiana. Other high-ranking members have also lived outside Texas at times.

Though the Aryan Circle does not engage in public rallies, demonstrations or meetings, its street members do hold private events together, including an annual meeting called "Nationals" that attracts numbers of non-incarcerated members. In 2008, the "Nationals" were held at Lake Whitley State Park during the summer.

With its prison and street membership combined, the Aryan Circle probably has around 1,400 members, making it one of the larger white supremacist groups in the United States. In contrast, the largest neo-Nazi group in the United States, the National Socialist Movement, has fewer than 400 members. Moreover, the Aryan Circle is better organized and has a higher association with violence and criminal activity than most other white supremacist groups, making it truly dangerous.

V. Aryan Circle Organization

- The Aryan Circle is headed by an elected president and its four branches are run by senior members.
- The group has a hierarchy of officers that includes majors, captains/district captains, and lesser ranks.

The Aryan Circle has a complex organization because of its presence in the Texas prison system, the federal prison system, the systems of other states, and in the free world in Texas and elsewhere. The detailed structure and hierarchy of the Aryan Circle is necessary to function within the controlled confines of a prison environment. It is also necessary to instill some sense of discipline into a membership that consists largely of convicted criminals, many of whom may have self-control issues.

Vertically, the top of the Circle is the Upper Board (or "Ugly Boys" in Aryan Circle slang), which includes the president, vice president and administrative chairman. The Aryan Circle has four branches (one for Texas prisons, one for the federal prison system, one for out of state prisons, and one for the free world), each of which has its own Middle Board. The out of state prisons are further divided into a handful of regions, each incorporating one or more states.

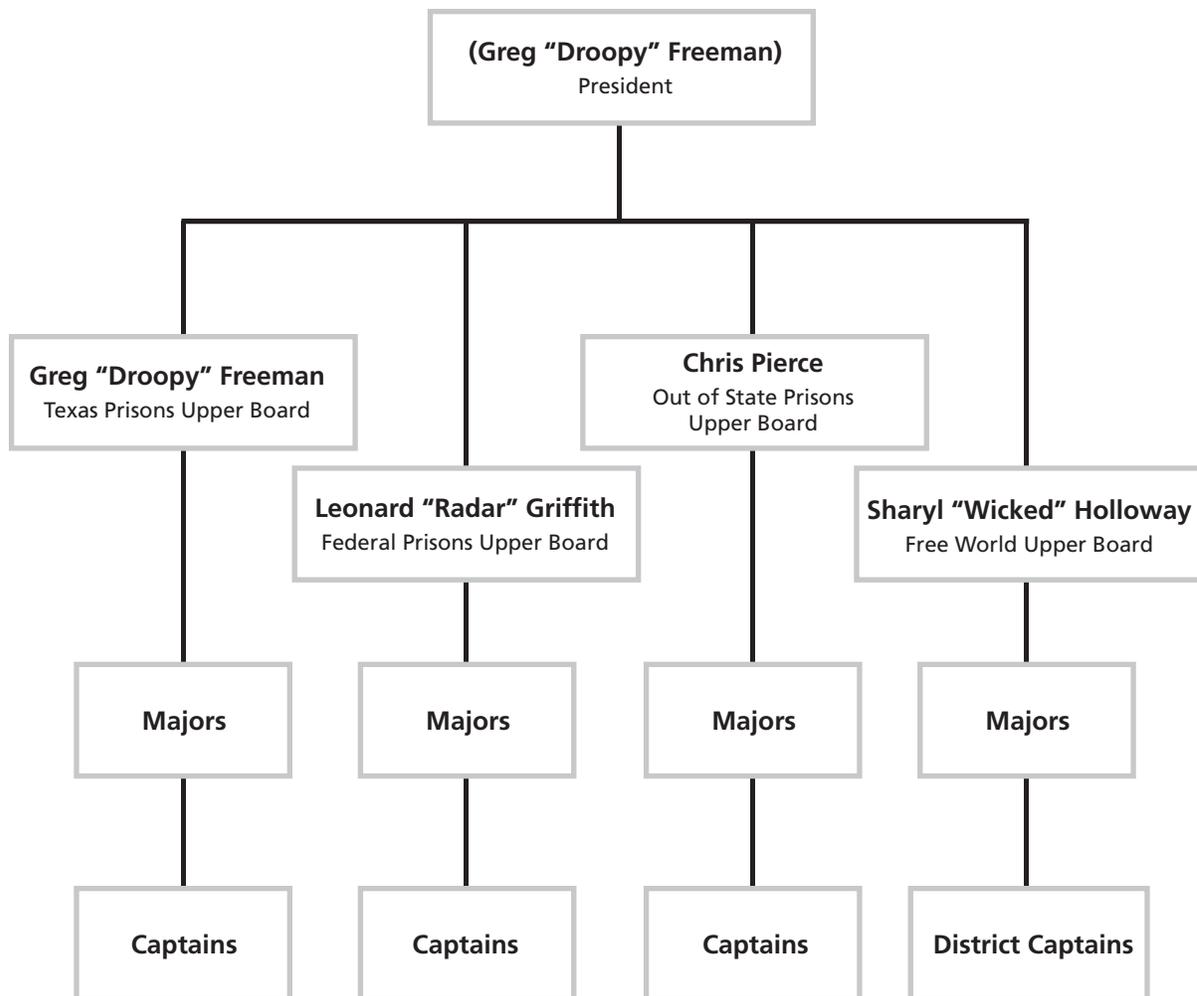
The four Middle Boards each include the Upper Board members, as well as the vice president and director of each branch. Rules and regulations for the various branches come from the Center Rings ("Crazy Folks"), which include all Middle Board members.

The Aryan Circle is also divided between prison and free world chains of command. Each prison has its hierarchy, as well as some groups of prisons (particularly for those with smaller Circle populations). In the free world, Texas is divided into districts, presided over by district captains ("Clowns"), who report to majors ("Leafs" or "Maniacs") who control a number of districts. The Free World branch is becoming increasingly important because of the Circle's increased street presence. It also holds the Circle's treasury and records; according to Circle literature, "in order to keep ZOG [Zionist Occupied Government] at bay as much as possible, we will not allow misdeeds into this branch."

In some cases, the official hierarchy of the Aryan Circle is honored more in theory than in practice, and there have reportedly been cases of people self-appointing themselves to ranks in the absence of other contenders. Power struggles and factional fights also sometimes result in more than one person claiming the same position.

ARYAN CIRCLE STRUCTURE

(Position holders may change due to 2008-09 power struggles)



The Circle also has “special assignment” captains and majors (the former is a temporary assignment, while the latter is a permanent rank) who perform specific tasks or responsibilities. These can range from managing some aspect of the Circle’s organization to performing a “hit” or other specific criminal act.

The large size of the group also allows the Aryan Circle to permit what one might call “special interest groups” within the organization. Such entities are usually the creation of one or more enterprising individuals and rise and fall based on the enthusiasm that they can generate within the organization. In 1998, incarcerated Circle special assignment major Horace Scott Lacey created a Legal Action Team to provide legal advice and support to Circle members; several years later he created an Aryan Circle Education Department. In 1995, some members created a Circle-associated motorcycle club dubbed the Iron Circle. There are still Aryan Circle “riders” to this day.

Similarly, motivated Aryan Circle members have established a number of newsletters or publications over the years, starting with the “The Circular,” created by founder Gaspard. Often, newsletters are created for specific subsections of the group. In the late 1990s, for example, some members created a newsletter for women, “The Diamond Ring.” Aryan Circle members incarcerated at the federal prison at El Reno created their own newsletter titled “Since ‘85.”

There are, additionally, several “official” Aryan Circle newsletters published and distributed by the leadership to communicate new policies and rules, as well as other developments. “Right Way” is an occasional newsletter sent out to the entire membership of the group, while the Federation Circular is for federal inmates and “Blue & Gray” is for out of state members.

VI. Aryan Circle Control and Power Issues

- The election of Billy “Thumper” Haynes as Aryan Circle president in early 2008 has provoked in-fighting within the group.
- Dissenting members objected to Haynes’ status as a sex offender.
- Many of the dissenters are in the federal prison branch of Aryan Circle.

The Circle’s elaborate chain of command is not unique among extremist groups, but what does distinguish it is that members actually follow it. Many extremist groups establish elaborate hierarchies that they do not follow in practice.

Prison gangs are different, because they have more disciplinary tools at their disposal. In a prison environment, simply being expelled from a group can have serious negative consequences, because it means the group will no longer defend that person. Because the Aryan Circle is willing to use violence to enforce its rules, however, negative consequences can be far worse than mere expulsion, including death.

Control tactics are more difficult when there are disagreements in the top ranks. Such disagree-

ments have existed for some time in the Aryan Circle, which has not yet fully emerged from a serious power struggle for leadership of the group in the mid 2000s. One problem for the Circle is that its diffuse nature allows the creation of different power blocs—the federal prison system, the Texas state system, the out of state members, and the free world members—as well as blocs in support of particular individuals.

For several years prior to 2008, the Aryan Circle had a relatively weak and divided leadership, with interim and acting presidents, as well as presidents against whom there was significant opposition among senior Circle members. After Johnny “JJ” Jones was removed as president, Thomas “TJ” Champion stepped forward to serve as acting president. In late 2007, he and other leaders arranged for a vote from the entire membership of the Aryan Circle for a new permanent president.

The winner, announced in February 2008, was Champion’s ally, Billy “Thumper” Haynes, most recently of Odessa. Haynes created a new Upper Board, putting T. J. Champion in charge of the out of state system, Leonard “Radar” Griffith over the federal system, and Greg “Droopy” Freeman over the Texas system. Haynes himself would oversee the free world membership.

Haynes’ ascension to power created controversy (or “drama,” as Circle members refer to it) within the Aryan Circle. One source of dissent was a rival for power, Norman “Psycho” Smith, a Circle vice president and Leavenworth inmate who had previously overseen the federal system and who allegedly threatened not to honor the vote putting Haynes in charge. Haynes and his allies promptly removed Smith from his position and threatened to take his “art” (i.e., his Aryan Circle tattoo, meaning that he would be expelled from the group). It was among federally incarcerated Circle members where Haynes garnered the greatest opposition.

One reason why a number of Aryan Circle members were uncomfortable or opposed to Haynes’ rise to power was ironically because of his criminal past: Haynes was a registered sex offender. In 1994, Haynes was convicted of sexual assault of a child—a 14 year old girl. Haynes, an adult teenager at the time of the offense, received a 10 year sentence for the crime. The state of Texas rates him a “moderate” risk level sexual offender.

Sex offenders are usually despised by prison gang members, and frequently assaulted or even murdered by them. Haynes, however, was able to join the Aryan Circle and rise to a position of power within the group, though his past repeatedly came up as an issue. As he was promoted, Circle members “investigated” and “cleared” him several times, paving the way for his ascension. Still, many Circle members continued to object to Haynes and opposed his election to president.

As a result, Haynes’ supporters, as well as others who simply wanted to calm the waters, had to come out in force to try to convince the membership to accept the election results. “We all know Thump did time on a sex charge,” wrote one Aryan Circle member, “Mouse,” in an early 2008 newsletter. “That’s a loaded term...He was cleared because this is a non-issue. He was a kid, she was a kid, he was just a couple years older. If you can go to the same high school its (sic) no big deal...Thumper had consensual sex with a teenage girl when he was a teenager... I robbed and shot an innocent white man and ruined his life. How can I look down my nose at this brother?”

Yet many Circle members, a number of whom had young daughters of their own, were not necessarily convinced. Over a year after his "inauguration," Haynes' leadership remained a bone of contention within the Aryan Circle, especially among federal prisoners. "Thump is the one, we all as a whole must honor the vote," urged one member in a late 2008 Circle newsletter. "Anyone who doesn't isn't for the whole of this family." Eventually even Leonard "Radar" Griffith, who headed the Circle federal prison section, was ousted from his position due to alleged disloyalty against Haynes. As of September 2009, Smith and his followers are still attempting to lead a rebellion of sorts against their opponents within the Circle.

Ultimately, however, it was criminal activity which brought Haynes down from his short reign. In October 2008, Haynes, his fiancé Summer Heinz, and five other Aryan Circle members and associates were arrested in Odessa for allegedly fatally shooting a Hispanic man. All seven were charged with engaging in organized criminal activity/murder and are in jail in Ector County, awaiting trial. This "distraction," along with the rebellion against him, caused Haynes to step down as president, allegedly to be replaced by Greg "Droopy" Freeman.

The latest version of the Aryan Circle power structure, then, appears to be Freeman as president (and still maintaining control over Texas prisons), with Chris Pierce heading the out-of-state system (replacing Thomas "TJ" Campion, an ally of Haynes'). It is unclear who has been named to replace Griffith in the federal system, while Sharyl "Wicked" Holloway is currently managing the free world members, although it is not clear if this is on a permanent or temporary basis. Clearly, the Aryan Circle leadership is still in a state of considerable flux and instability.

VII. Aryan Circle Recruitment and Prospecting

- The Aryan Circle recruits both in prisons and on the streets.
- It uses a "prospect" system that vets new recruits and provides an indoctrination period.

The Aryan Circle actively recruits both within the prison system and on the streets. However, membership is not automatic. The Circle scrutinizes the background of its recruits and subjects them to an extended period as a "prospect" (or "spec") before granting them full membership. These procedures make it more difficult to infiltrate the group and allow the Circle to weed out people it deems undesirable.

At its inception, the Aryan Circle required prospective members to be approved by its Center Ring, but the growth of the gang over the years made that system unwieldy. In 2006, the Circle adopted a set of new guidelines for recruits. One key provision is that recruits are required to have a full-fledged ("patch-wearing") Circle member as a sponsor; this usually means that a recruit has been vetted to at least some degree before the prospect process formally starts. The sponsor must obtain detailed information from the recruit, ranging from a Social Security number to the recruit's criminal history from the federal National Crime Information Center (NCIC). The sponsor is also supposed to identify three other members who will verify the "solidarity" of the recruit. Circle members in the recruit's district would then vote on admittance, with unanimous approval required.

Following the results of this first vote, the Circle's Prospection Office would establish an official start date for the prospect period and give the recruit an official prospect number. The new prospect would then undergo a one-year prospect period (although some Aryan Circle leaders subsequently used nine months as a minimum period rather than a full year) with accompanying background checks, following which another unanimous district level vote would be required. If the prospect survived all this, the Circle would admit him (or her) as a full member, allow him to get an Aryan Circle tattoo, and give him an official "patch number." From that point on, he or she would be on the books as a full member of the Aryan Circle.

The prospect period not only allows Circle members to evaluate prospects, but also provides a period in which they can indoctrinate new members and socialize them into the group. As in some other prison gangs, the Aryan Circle often refers to the prospect period for recruits as "studies" or "education." A set of instructions for district captains on prospects told the captains that "it is your responsibility to make sure all prospective members are as solid as the next member. It takes more than just the ability to stand up for one's self to become a member in this family. The prospect must be racially oriented and have strong beliefs in our ways and lifestyles. They must believe in our goals and have ideas to obtain them." One new federal prospect, David Williams, proclaimed in 2008 that he was new to the family, but "am learning more each day...I hope to be a strong building block of this organization."

By the time prospects become patch-wearers, they are ready to demonstrate their loyalty and commitment to the group. "Soon I will have earned my Diamond," said prospect "Gene" in a letter to an Aryan Circle newsletter, "and I will stand on it proudly because I know it represents what I truly believe in. Our Dedication, Solidarity, Loyalty, and Brotherhood/Sisterhood is what will keep our kindred culture, heritage and history alive."

However, though there may be consequences for leaving the group, the Aryan Circle does not have a 100% "blood in blood out" policy expecting members to remain members for life, no matter what. In fact, the Circle has a formal process by which former members can apply to be readmitted—though they are only given one chance to return.

VIII. Aryan Circle Demographics

- The typical Aryan Circle member is a man in his late 20s or early 30s.
- Members tend to come from the lower part of the socio-economic spectrum; their criminal activity often supplements a meager blue collar or service industry paycheck.
- Many Aryan Circle members work in the oil industry in Texas.

The Aryan Circle, not surprisingly, is a homogenous group. As a white supremacist group, its membership is overwhelmingly Caucasian, although a small number of members do have some degree of Native American heritage.

Age

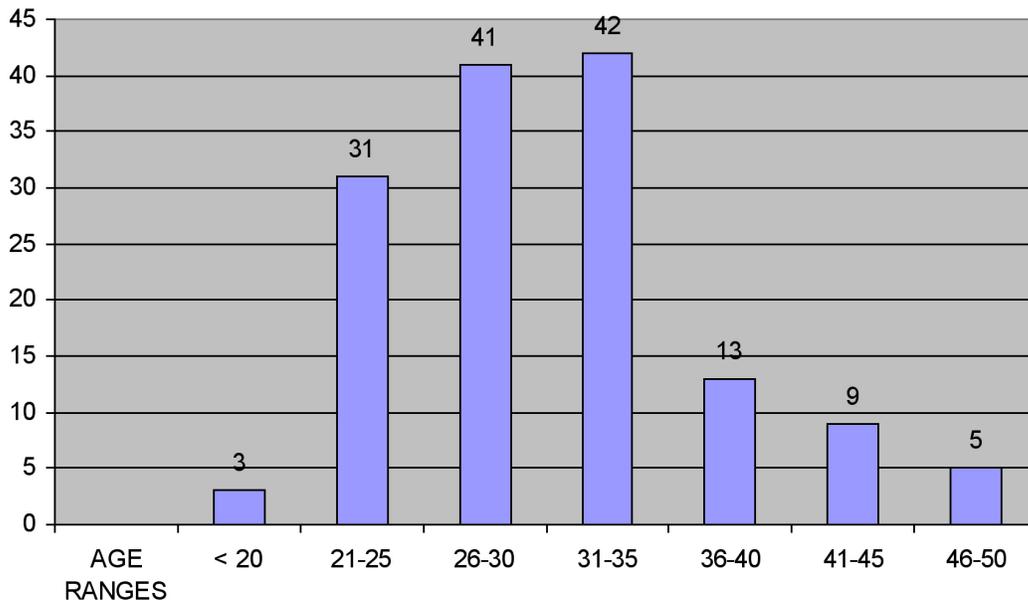
An analysis of Aryan Circle demographics, based on a sample of 144 members and associates (44 women and 100 men, both incarcerated and non-incarcerated), presents a “typical” member as a white male in his early 30s. The average age for an Aryan Circle member in the sample is 30.9 years, but there are several interesting variations. Male members and associates, for example, tend to be slightly older (31.9 years) than females (28.8 years).

Additionally, the incarcerated members in the sample are significantly older (37.4 years) than the non-incarcerated members (29.2 years). This disparity is partly explained by the fact that the data sources used to identify incarcerated members tend to reveal more senior or veteran members than they do rank-and-file members. However, anecdotal evidence seems to confirm the notion that the proportion of older Aryan Circle members is higher among the incarcerated than in the free world.

There is additionally a separate category worth noting that is not included in the above figures: the children of Aryan Circle members. Because Aryan Circle members in the free world socialize heavily with other Aryan Circle members, even to the extent of sometimes spending holidays like Christmas together, many children of Circle members grow up in an environment with heavy Circle influences. Adult Circle members are like uncles and aunts to them in an extended family of sorts; the adults indoctrinate the children in Circle beliefs and teach them about Aryan circle hand signs and symbols.

By the time they are teens, some Circle children identify with the group, even using its codes and symbols on on-line social networking profiles. Some teens are openly groomed by their parents as “specs” for eventual formal entry into the Aryan Circle. Even as teens, some Aryan Circle children already play an active role in the group.

Aryan Circle Age Distribution



Socioeconomic background

Although the Aryan Circle is a criminal organization, there are no equivalents of “Mafia millionaires” among the ranks of the Aryan Circle. Its members tend to come from poor or working class backgrounds, with insufficient education and few prospects. Photographic evidence strongly suggests that if there is any such thing as a “typical” Aryan Circle residence, it is a house trailer in a trailer park.

This basic socioeconomic fact, that Aryan Circle members tend to be “have nots,” is important in understanding the group. Its members often struggle to get by, and criminal income supplements otherwise meager paychecks. The Aryan Circle also offers the allure of status to its members and recruits: a sense of belonging and sometimes even power to people who are otherwise powerless. An Aryan Circle member in prison is no longer a “nobody,” but a member of a feared and respected group. An Aryan Circle captain or major may have no authority at his job in the free world, but presides over others within the Aryan Circle universe.

When not incarcerated, male Aryan Circle members usually work blue collar jobs, while women, when not stay at home mothers, typically work in low-paying jobs in the service sector. One important source of employment for Aryan Circle members for a number of years has been the oil industry, including both off-shore oil rigs as well as the oil and natural gas fields in west, north central and south Texas. Such jobs were scarcer in the 1990s, when low oil prices caused the Texas oil industry to suffer, but the record high prices for gas and oil in the United States have actually caused an oil boom in Texas, with the re-opening of many oil wells from which it was previously unprofitable to extract oil.

Consequently, oil field jobs are now more available, and Aryan Circle members help other members obtain them. Even Circle members who do not live in the oil producing areas of Texas sometimes travel to work there, returning home to their families on weekends. In an early 2008 Aryan Circle newsletter, one member even compiled a list of more than a dozen offshore oil and gas companies and their contact numbers, for the benefit of fellow Circle members looking for a job.

The presence of Aryan Circle members in the oil fields not surprisingly can cause problems. In the early 2000s, five New Mexico oil field workers (one African-American and four white) sued the drilling company they worked for after being harassed by Aryan Circle members employed by the drilling company. The workers complained that Aryan Circle members subjected them to verbal abuse, Nazi signs and symbols, and eventually hangman’s nooses. The drilling company eventually settled for \$859,000.

IX. The Role of Women in the Aryan Circle

- Unlike most major prison gangs, the Aryan Circle admits women as full members and has a significant female membership.
- Some women have achieved positions of considerable importance and responsibility within the group, but sexism prevents them from rising to the highest ranks.

One aspect of Aryan Circle demographics is particularly important: the role played in the group by women. Women are important for most prison gangs; they can act as couriers, can smuggle drugs or other contraband, and can provide support in various ways to incarcerated members. However, many prison gangs deny formal membership to women. The only patch-wearing members in many prison gangs are male.

The Aryan Circle, however, is different. From early in its history, the Aryan Circle has formally had a women's branch. Women can go through a prospect period and be accepted as full members just as men can. This fact distinguishes the Aryan Circle from a number of other prison gangs. Moreover, it has an important effect on the group: the presence of a significant number of women in the Aryan Circle strengthens the feeling of a clan or extended family among the membership — which in turn creates greater loyalty to and cohesion within the group.

In addition to formal female Aryan Circle members, there are a number of wives and girlfriends of male Aryan Circle members who, while not being patched Circle members, nevertheless actively socialize with and assist the Aryan Circle, to varying degrees, in a manner similar to other prison gangs.

Most women who get involved in the Aryan Circle tend to do so originally through a relationship with a male Aryan Circle member. There are a number of Aryan Circle husband and wife couples. Maria Vaught, a recently patched member, was originally involved with one male Circle member, who died. She later married Dustin Vaught, another Circle member. "I had always said," she wrote in a newsletter in early 2008, "I didn't need a Diamond on my finger, I needed one by my side! I have that diamond now and am about to have one on my finger as well."

Although many women became involved with male Aryan Circle members while the latter were not incarcerated, some seem to have met their partner while the man was an inmate. One female member of the Circle, who has said she had been a Texas corrections officer for a number of years, may have become acquainted with the Circle while on the job.

Women associated with the Aryan Circle tend to identify themselves as "featherwoods," the female equivalent of a peckerwood. Featherwoods are expected to support or be "down for" her man and her race. "I am a proud white woman with 3 beautiful children," wrote one Circle member. Another, identifying herself as "113% [code for "100% Aryan Circle"] Featherwood till I die," advertised on-line for a "fine ass white man" who wanted a "down fine ass featherwood."

Female members often express support for the Circle in the same breath they mention their own immediate family. One prominent female Circle member, Danna Powell, said in one on-line forum that her interests include "spending time with my 3 boys and husband...and being with my big circle of family." On another forum, she listed her hobbies as "starting a pagan newsletter for my prison brothers and sisters, reading, spending time with my kids and my large circle of Aryan friends." Another female member described herself as a "strong featherwood that is part of a loving family, Aryan Circle. I would kill or be killed for any one of my brothers or sisters, as they would for me."

In turn, male Circle members respond enthusiastically to such expressions of sentiment. "I got mad love for all featherwoods!!!" wrote one Dallas-based male Aryan Circle member (since incarcerated) to a female Circle member from Ft. Worth, "Makes my heart feel good that a white woman is stayin down for hers...and mine!!!" A member from Weatherford wrote the same woman with similar sentiments: "In this day and age it is actually a rare thing to find a white woman that is down for her race and know that our folks are enriched with your presence."

Women often play key roles in the Aryan Circle, especially in administrative capacities. Danna Powell, for example, mentioned above, is a member from St. Jo who has served as "prospec-tion officer" for the Circle, tracking and managing new Aryan Circle recruits, and helps run the recently announced "drug free" program for the Circle.

Perhaps the most important female Aryan Circle member, though, is Sharyl "Wicked" Holloway of Hudson, Texas. The partner of another Circle member, Brett "Ace" Gregory, Holloway runs the Records Office for the Aryan Circle. In practice, she runs the main communications hub for the entire group, along with several other female Circle members under her. She publishes various newsletters for Aryan Circle members to communicate news and policies, she puts all recently released or moved Circle members in touch with their new district captains, she receives paperwork (such as NCIC records) on prospects, she maintains official membership rolls, she keeps records such as election results, and she arranges "three way" communications between Circle members (because prisoners are not allowed to write directly to other prisoners, they will instead write a non-prisoner who will then communicate with the desired prisoner). If this were not enough, Holloway also operates the Circle's primary on-line hub, using the on-line social networking service Myspace to communicate with Circle members and associates from around Texas and beyond.

Holloway is one of the key Aryan Circle leaders, but has not had rank commensurate to her responsibilities, a fact due to Circle attitudes towards women. Even though women can join and be active within the Aryan Circle, they have roles they are expected to play—or not play. "Men and women are not equal," wrote one Circle member in an issue of the late 1990s "Diamond Ring" women's newsletter, "but when we recognize our specific attributes and exploit our full potential we are 'equally important parts' of our great race." Women can bear Aryan Circle children, support Aryan Circle men, run mail drops or play other administrative roles, even engage in criminal activities of a variety of sorts, but not be top leaders, a role reserved for men.

Holloway herself had to address some of these issues after federally incarcerated Circle members complained about her status in 2007-2008. "I am not [Upper Board]," she explained in one of her newsletters. "My title is UBRO, which is upper boards records office, but that by no means puts me up there with the ugly boys [Upper Board]. I am still just a CR [Center Ring] and that's it, so relax and quit tripping thinking a female is up there. I know most of you would die of a heart attack if that were to happen and you guys are not trying to have any female up there. I am grateful for the few of you that think I could do it and that do have faith in me and think I would do a good job. That makes me feel good. I love you guys. Your support is always appreciated."

As a result of the 2009 shakeup in the leadership structure of the Aryan Circle following the arrest of Billy Wayne Haynes, Holloway herself has been recently presiding over the free world membership of the Circle, or so she informed a documentary crew in June 2009. This suggests that perhaps Holloway could break the “diamond ceiling” of the Aryan Circle. However, it is not clear if she is doing this on a temporary or permanent basis or whether she is now an Upper Board member. The situation is still in flux.

X. From the Prisons to the Streets

- The growth of the Aryan Circle’s street membership since the late 1990s has increased its criminal opportunities and ability to recruit.
- Incarcerated members are expected to report to their “free world” district captain and continue their association with the group.

Although the Aryan Circle originated in the Texas prison system, it did not stay there. Not only did it migrate into the prison systems of other states, but by the late 1990s it had developed a significant presence in Texas outside the prison system, as growing numbers of members were released back into society. Though the “free world” stays of many members are relatively brief — many Circle adherents re-offend before too long — the rapid growth of the group by the 2000s allowed it to establish a permanent street presence. Now the Aryan Circle in Texas has a command structure of districts led by district captains that parallels its prison command structure.

The Aryan Circle’s street presence has come to have a number of important effects, the most important of which has been the growth of criminal opportunities for the group. On the streets, Aryan Circle members can engage in much more robust drug trafficking, especially methamphetamine production and sales, as well as white collar crimes such as identity theft. Closely linked to this growth of criminal enterprise has been the growth of Aryan Circle violence, including many murders. These attacks have been directed at targets ranging from rivals to crime victims to members of their own group suspected of being disloyal.

“I have been honored to be a part of this Family for the last five years,” wrote one federal Aryan Circle inmate in 2007, “and I am finally going to see what the Family is like on the outside, and I hope that I can do as much from the streets as I do here.” Aryan Circle members are expected to remain group members upon release and to report to their local district captain when settled, where they can once more become involved in Aryan Circle activities.

“In February (2007) I got out of Dawson State Hell,” wrote female Aryan Circle member Maria Vaught in a 2008 newsletter, “and made that phone call to Wicked [i.e. contacted Sharyl Holloway to get instructions for reporting to a captain] and started my journey in this family.” The journey led back to jail for Vaught later that year, but other free world members supported her during her incarceration, even raising money for her bond so that she could get out of jail for the holidays. “The love that was shown to me during that time was phenomenal,” she effused, “I’ve never in my life known that kind of true love and it felt so good and still does.” Aryan Circle members even sent her items such as feminine hygiene products and underwear to make her incarceration easier.

The Aryan Circle also makes at least some gesture towards helping members get settled upon their release from prison. Even finding a job can be difficult for ex-convicts. When Maria Vaught was released in 2007, she had to spend months working at a fast food restaurant. This is one reason why the Aryan Circle works to place its members in the oil industry, both offshore and onshore, which boomed during the 2000s due to the high price of oil.

XI. Aryan Circle Ideology and Group Solidarity

- Aryan Circle ideology was originally “homegrown” and crude, but over time has become more sophisticated and closer to that of other white supremacist groups.
- However, many Circle members still have only a crude understanding of white supremacist ideology.
- The Circle uses its white supremacy to increase solidarity within its ranks, trying to create an extend Aryan “family” to which all are loyal.

There is no single grand concept of “white supremacy” in the United States to which all white supremacists adhere, but decades of consistent cross-pollination of racist and anti-Semitic ideas have created a set of concepts and ideas that most white supremacists share, whether Klan or neo-Nazi or racist skinhead.

However, for many years racist prison gangs such as the Aryan Circle were largely outside of this “mainstream” white supremacy. In their prison cells, gang members could not participate in free world white supremacist events, while even their access to white supremacist literature was limited. Because of this, many racist prison gangs developed a sort of “home grown” white supremacy, cruder in nature than their free world counterparts. Moreover, racist prison gangs learned to tailor their racist teachings to serve other goals as well, such as enhancing group loyalty. The result was a form of white supremacy that was anti-Black and anti-Hispanic but originally less anti-Semitic than free world white supremacy, and which focused on the notion of sticking up for one’s immediate white brothers, i.e. other group members.

However, this original form of prison white supremacy evolved over the years and has converged to some degree with “mainstream” white supremacy. Several factors were responsible for this development. First, “traditional” white supremacists sent to prison for criminal acts provided a source of main-line white supremacist ideology for members of racist prison gangs. Second, the growing popularity of Odinism (a neo-pagan religion resurrecting ancient Norse religious beliefs, popular among white supremacists) within racist prison gangs formed another axis of convergence. And lastly, the Internet increasingly provided a way for non-incarcerated gang members to educate themselves and each other. As a result, the ideological sophistication of individual racist prison gang members varies considerably, from members with very crude racist beliefs to people fully conversant with modern white supremacist concepts and ideas.

The Aryan Circle stands as a good example. Its constitution lists a number of beliefs to which members are supposed to adhere, including “the betterment and preservation of our race,”

“separation,” “the whites of the right race,” and “honor and pride for our beautiful race and heritage,” among others. These beliefs are racist, but make no references or allusions to main-line white supremacist concepts or slogans. The Aryan Circle did focus on the idea of “self-preservation,” as in this declaration from the 2002 version of its constitution: “We are a racially aware group of individuals who believe [sic] in the true history, culture, and heritage of the White Race, we strive for the best interest of our race, will put the interests of our race before the interest of others, and believe in the idea of self-preservation!!!”

Aryan Circle “educational” activities within the prisons teach not only group rules and regulations but also try to instill concepts of white supremacy. However, the materials at their disposal are often limited, including basic reference books on World War II and Nazi Germany found in prison libraries or purchased by inmates, materials on Odinism allowed into prisons, occasional white supremacist periodicals from the free world allowed into prisons, and books like *The Bell Curve*.

In contrast, unincarcerated Aryan Circle members have the full range of white supremacist materials at their disposal. This has allowed many Circle members over time to develop a considerable knowledge of free world white supremacy, including concepts like the “14 Words” and the “88 Precepts” (a set of white supremacist tenets created by David Lane, who also coined the “14 Words”), influential white supremacist figures such as Richard Kelly Hoskins and David Lane, and books such as William Pierce’s *The Turner Diaries* and David Duke’s *My Awakening*. Even some incarcerated Aryan Circle members have been able to find and read some of the more complex works of white supremacist literature such as William Gayley Simpson’s *Which Way Western Man*.

Because Aryan Circle leaders consistently try to use concepts of white supremacy to enhance feelings of group loyalty, many Aryan Circle members think of white supremacy not so much in a global sense but rather in the much more limited sphere of their own group as a sort of extended “Aryan Family.” Comments from a variety of Aryan Circle members give an idea of how they conceive of white supremacy:

- “Never forget the 14 Words! It is for you and those like you that we fight!”
- “113% Aryan Male. Working for the betterment of my Family and my bloodline.”
- “I love my race, and love my Aryan Family...I can’t stand niggers, or any one who tries to be a nigger.”
- “I am an Aryan Diamond Featherwood who’s [sic] blood bleeds blue and grey! I live for the 14 Words and the 88 Precepts! I stand tall and fade all beside my brothers and sisters as we march on to victory or Valhalla! Sieg Heil!”
- “I am a SUCKER for a bald, tall, inked down peckerwood, especially a DIAMOND who is 113%, all others burn in hell with the rest of the jews and niggers!”
- “And all my family who lives for the 14 Words 113%.”
- “I am an extremely proud Aryan diamond woman who is clean and can now say I am part of the solution and not part of the problem in this struggle to keep our beautiful race alive... We live our lives 113% in all we do! Sieg heil!”

As many of the above declarations indicate, loyalty or love for the Aryan Circle is as important, or more so, than white supremacy itself. This is no coincidence, as members are indoctrinated from the moment they join the Circle that loyalty to the group is all-important. It is, after all, loyalty to group over self that is key to the survival of an organized crime group like the Aryan Circle. According to the Aryan Circle constitution, the group “can only be as strong as its weakest link. No matter how dedicated we are, if we have one brother or sister who is not totally loyal then the whole organization is only as strong as he or she...Solidarity is our backbone and unity our brace. We cannot have one without the other.”

The prospect guidelines issued by the Aryan Circle leadership reinforce this notion: “It takes more than just the ability to stand up for oneself to become a member in this family. The prospect must be racially oriented and have strong beliefs in our ways and lifestyles. They must believe in our goals and have ideas to obtain them...Soldiers are a dime a dozen. Brothers and Sisters are like Diamonds! We will expect nothing less.” One Circle member from the Houston area used a Mafia self-description, “this thing of ours,” in a paen to loyalty that he penned for an Aryan Circle newsletter in 2008: “I have seen Bros open up their homes to Brothers in need. I have seen Bros risk their own personal well being for another Bro. I know of Bros that have lost their lives and their freedom behind this thing of ours...” In a 2009 newsletter, another Aryan Circle member used an infernal analogy: “My brothers and sisters have love and loyalty and I will follow them through the gates of Hell if called upon.”

XII. Relationships with other Groups

- The Aryan Circle has engaged with gang wars with other prison gangs in Texas.
- Its chief rival is the Texas Aryan Brotherhood.

The Aryan Circle has few relationships with “traditional” white supremacist groups such as Klan and neo-Nazi groups, but in the prison environment its members must constantly interact with a variety of other prison gangs of different types and sizes. Because prison gangs compete for power, money and prestige, their relationships are at best problematical and sometimes devolve into full-scale war.

Although it was created in the mid-1980s, the Aryan Circle took some years before it really began to challenge other major gangs. However, in the 1990s, the Aryan Circle emerged with a vengeance, taking on groups such as the White Knights, the Texas Aryan Brotherhood and the Texas Mexican Mafia (TMM) in violent prison wars. The “war” with the TMM allegedly lasted for years with more than a dozen killings.

However, though prison gangs are racially aligned, sometimes the worst feuds are not with gangs of other races, but with gangs similar to themselves, as they compete for dominance in their racial sphere. The Aryan Circle is no exception. One early group it clashed with were the White Knights. After a number of more minor incidents, events came to a boil in 1997 when a White Knight in the Terrell Unit attacked Aryan Circle vice president Terry Rayborn. Prison officials placed the unit on lockdown but when the lockdown was ended, a group of Aryan Circle

members almost immediately murdered the White Knight who had attacked Rayborn, and injured another person who tried to come to his aid. This began a lengthy, and sometimes deadly, feud between the White Knights and the Aryan Circle.

Relations with the Texas Aryan Brotherhood were initially just as bad. Fighting between the two groups several times forced the Texas prison system into lockdown because of the intergroup attacks. In November 2000, Joe Jackson of the Texas Aryan Brotherhood and Mark Gaspard of the Aryan Circle signed a tentative peace treaty between the two groups, which was followed up with a more permanent one that established a sort of “cold war” between the two groups. This uneasy truce still held in 2009, though not without friction between the gangs. An Aryan Circle officer had to warn members about retaliating against “Amy and her brats” (an example of creative Aryan Circle slang for “Aryan Brotherhood;” Brotherhood members in turn refer to the Aryan Circle with terms such as “Circle Jerks.”). “This is a dead issue,” he wrote, “and we will not be the ones that stir the pot. Those dudes have put out memos stating that if any of theirs break the agreement, that they will loose [sic] their shit. Well guess what, we are doing the same...if any of ours starts a war with any white group period and can not fully justify his actions, then yes, I am going for your ‘art’ [i.e., expelling the member].” Interestingly, relations between the two rival gangs appear to be less strained on the streets than in the prisons.

Conflicts can occur within the federal prison system as well as the Texas system. In 2004, for example, authorities confiscated an Aryan Circle letter containing “smash on sight” orders directed against members of the Dirty White Boys (or “Dweebs,” as Aryan Circle members call them). Conflicts between the two gangs emerged again in 2008, with members assaulting each other in several federal prisons. However, Aryan Circle leaders tried to avoid escalating the incidents into a wider conflict.

XIII. Drug Use and the Aryan Circle

- Aryan Circle members do not just manufacture and traffic in illegal drugs; many members are also users, especially of methamphetamine.
- Circle leadership has attempted to stem drug use among members, without much success.

In its more than 20 year history, the Aryan Circle has faced a number of internal controversies. One early controversy arose over prison homosexuality, as some original Circle members engaged in homosexual activity with other inmates, a practice that was later officially prohibited. In recent years, one of the largest controversies within the group has been the issue of illegal drugs.

Production and sale of illegal drugs, especially methamphetamines, is one of the Aryan Circle’s major areas of criminal activity, both in and out of prisons. However, some Aryan Circle members find this fact difficult to square with the group’s white supremacist ideology, because selling drugs to fellow whites would seem to be hurting the white race. Because of this, objections to involvement with drugs at all occasionally emerge from the Circle membership. “Honestly,” wrote Circle member Michael Holleman in a 2008 newsletter, “how can you call yourself an ‘aryan’ or aim to be for the white race if your [sic] selling that poison to your own...?”

However, so central to the Aryan Circle are drug sales that most Circle members prefer to side-step this apparent moral dilemma. It has been much harder for members to ignore the problem of drug addiction within their own ranks. Cooking meth, selling meth, surrounded by meth (and meth users), and coming from a region of the country plagued by meth, Circle members by their own admission all too often fall victim to their own scourge. In addition to the normal problems addiction causes, meth addiction creates even more woes for Circle members. Addicts are susceptible to lapses in judgment and responsibility, for example. Their drug addiction itself might lead to them being arrested, which could either result in prison time for them, or worse, from the perspective of the Circle, might tempt them to inform on their comrades. In other words, drug use by Circle members interferes with business. "That shit has done nothing but tear this family apart," complained Billy "Thumper" Haynes.

Accordingly, the Aryan Circle leadership initiated a "No Dope" policy in 2005. It was not very successful. Some mid-level leaders did not enforce it—perhaps having addiction problems of their own—while there were many addicted Circle members who could not simply stop using, even if they wanted to. Some members apparently thought that the policy was intended only for officers, not for the rank and file as well.

After Billy "Thumper" Haynes rose to leadership in 2008, the Circle re-launched the "No Dope" policy. "Drugs are primarily the reason most of us go to prison," Sharyl Holloway told members in an Aryan Circle newsletter focusing on the "No Dope" rule, "because they aren't in the right frame of mind to take care of themselves and handle business and be a productive, positive member of society."

Other past and present Circle leaders emerged to support Haynes' new "No Dope" policy. Some spoke of their own bad experiences. "Four trips to prison," wrote one member of long standing, "and all of them were for crimes I committed on dope or to get dope. I quit the dope and all of a sudden I'm not going to prison anymore...I want you all to know that I fully support the NO DOPE POLICY!" Others focused on making sure mid-level Circle officers toed the line. "Many of our Brothers and Sisters are still using drugs," noted a Circle member with the nickname of "Bubba," "and they are doing so because they are being ALLOWED to by their immediate [chain of command]. This has to be stopped. Allowing the use of drugs is undermining [the Circle's] effort to help us reach the heights and build a strong foundation."

In a modest attempt to provide a carrot as well as a stick, Aryan Circle vice president Mike Lewis and longstanding member Danna Powell Theriault announced the creation of a "Chemical Free" program. Participants take an oath to swear off drugs and are entitled to a special tattoo (there was a contest for the design); this public commitment is supposed to hold them to that oath. "If you take this oath and accept this patch, you better not break it," warned Lewis. "The penalty is your art and by signing your oath, you are in full agreement to this. There will be NO second chance to keep your art."

By late 2008, the Chemical Free program had garnered vocal support from members, but amassed only a relatively limited number of actual oath-takers (though at least 30). It is almost a certainty that drug use by Aryan Circle members will continue to cause problems for the group for years to come.

XIV. Aryan Circle Criminal Activity

- Criminal activity and the Aryan Circle go hand in hand. Most of the criminal activity is organized crime, but members occasionally engage in hate crimes as well.
- Organized criminal activity ranges from methamphetamine production and distribution to a variety of theft rings.
- Often, their violence is directed against people in their own ranks, such as suspected informers or people who have infringed gang rules.
- Aryan Circle members have also engaged in hate-related violence, against African-Americans, Hispanics, and gays.

Criminal activity, often violent, follows the Aryan Circle wherever it goes. As both an organized crime group and a hate group, as well as part of a prison subculture that often encourages violence, the Aryan Circle is inextricably linked to crime.

Aryan Circle criminal activity largely consists of two main categories of crime. There are further differences based on whether the context is a prison environment or a non-prison one. The two main categories are:

1) Organized crime. Aryan Circle organized crime activities, both white collar and violent, are committed to make money for the group and its members. The particular crimes vary depending on the environment (prison or non-prison), though illegal drugs play an important role in both. This category also includes acts of violence against rival gangs as well as internally-directed violence, such as killing a suspected informer in the gang's own ranks.

2) Hate/Ideologically related crime. These are crimes, usually hate crimes, that are related to the white supremacist ideology of the Aryan Circle. Most such incidents occur within prison walls, directed against victims of other races or backgrounds, or who are gay or transgender. They are less common outside of prison.

In addition, because they come from an environment where both criminal activity and violence are tolerated or even encouraged, Aryan Circle members may often commit crimes that are not directly related to the group. Such crimes might have a profit motive, such as theft, or might be violent in nature. The latter often occur behind prison walls, where an Aryan Circle prisoner might lash out at another inmate who crossed or "disrespected" him in some way. Circle members may also commit violent crimes directed at police or corrections officers, whether as attempts to elude capture—as in the Bastrop murders—or in acts of retaliation.

Organized Crime: Profit

Inside prison walls and out, most Aryan Circle criminal activity is profit-oriented. While prisons do not seem like ideal profit centers, gang members make the most of their monopoly. The Aryan Circle, like most other prison gangs, employs both the carrot and the stick.

The stick, in this case, consists of protection rackets, unless they regularly pay for “protection.” In prisons with an Aryan Circle presence there will typically be other prisoners, not actual Aryan Circle members, but rather inmates who “ride” with the Aryan Circle. Often, these inmates are prisoners who pay the Circle for protection, both from other inmates and from the predatory Circle itself.

More lucrative for the Aryan Circle, though, is the carrot: selling contraband items to other prisoners. The contraband could consist of any prohibited item, but drugs are by far the most important (including tobacco, legal on the outside but prohibited in Texas prisons). A pack of cigarettes can sell for astronomical prices behind prison walls.

Despite being in a highly controlled environment, prison gang members are experts at smuggling. Small amounts of heroin, for example, can be concealed beneath a postage stamp on a postcard sent to an inmate. Faced with such ingenuity, even the hardest working prison officials cannot prevent every attempt to smuggle contraband. Prison walls are more porous than many might think.

The Aryan Circle also engages in bribery and extortion to co-opt corrections officers and other prison employees into smuggling contraband for them. Corrections officers in Texas are among the lowest paid in the country, despite Texas having one of the largest prison populations. Texas corrections officers are also overworked (the Texas Department of Criminal Justice was short more than 4,000 guards in 2008, due in part to the state’s policy of locating prisons in sparsely populated areas). It is not surprising, then, that some corrections personnel succumb to the lure of bribery.

However, when bribery does not work, the Aryan Circle is not averse to using extortion. An officer at the Allred Unit, a Texas prison noted for its gang activity, gave a description in 2001 of his experience with an Aryan Circle extortion attempt. According to the guard, a Circle member, Robert Dewayne Bennett, approached him and offered him \$100 to bring tobacco into the prison. Bennett told the officer that whatever building he worked in would be “safe” if he participated. In a subsequent conversation, Bennett threatened that the Aryan Circle could “take care” of the officer wherever he went, even in the free world. Bennett was later convicted of extortion of a correctional officer.

In addition to such traditional prison crimes, Aryan Circle members are always on the lookout for new opportunities. One of the most novel in recent years was a subscription fraud ring run in 2003 by several Aryan Circle members in two different prisons. The inmates—who were actually housed in administrative segregation at the time—sent hundreds of letters to newspapers and magazines complaining about (non-existent) subscriptions not being received and asking for a refund (attaching a false tracking receipt).

Outside prison walls, Aryan Circle members are free to engage in a wide variety of criminal activities. Among the most common are theft and robbery. In early September 2008, for example, four Aryan Circle members were arrested in the south Texas city of Brownsville for allegedly running a truck theft ring. Authorities believed they were stealing Ford pickup trucks in the United States and selling them across the border in Matamoros in Mexico. Several years earlier,

a group of Aryan Circle members from the Houston area were caught running an ATM theft ring in Texas, Oklahoma, and several other states. Perpetrators would break into convenience stores and force open ATM machines inside. During the investigation, Houston police found equipment to make counterfeit drivers licenses and payroll checks in the home of one of the suspects, suggesting that the group might have been engaging in other illicit activities as well.

Sometimes extreme violence has accompanied Aryan Circle robberies. One such incident occurred in July 2007 in Mansfield in north Texas, where five suspected Aryan Circle members allegedly broke into a man's home to ransack and rob it. Local sheriff's deputies found the owner tied up in his house and shot, execution-style, in the back of his head. Amazingly, the victim survived the murder attempt.

The major "free world" criminal activity that Aryan Circle members engage in, however, is in the production and sales of illegal drugs, especially methamphetamine. Circle members have been arrested on drug charges in every region of Texas. As is also the case with its rival gang, the Texas Aryan Brotherhood, a number of arrests for methamphetamine production or sales have been "hotel busts," in which the perpetrators rent a hotel room at an inexpensive hotel and use the room to cook and/or sell meth.

A typical example might be George Steven Owen, an Aryan Circle member sentenced to 40 years in prison in late 2005 for possession of methamphetamine with intent to deliver. Owen was arrested in a cheap hotel room in the Austin suburb of Round Rock, where police found marijuana, meth and chemicals to make meth.

Occasionally, though, Aryan Circle members engage in larger and more organized production and distribution of illegal substances. The most ambitious of these was the Circle's Odessa meth ring. In March 2004, the Justice Department made public indictments against 29 Aryan Circle members and associates who had been running a massive methamphetamine production and distribution ring in the Odessa-Midland area of West Texas. At the time, authorities estimated that the Circle had about 70 members in the region, so the meth ring was by far the gang's most important activity in West Texas. Between 2000 and 2004, this ring produced over 15,000 grams of meth. Through its own production attempts, as well as through assaults on and intimidation of other meth producers, the Aryan Circle essentially cornered the market on meth in the region — authorities estimated that the Circle controlled 80% of the meth trade in West Texas.

Prosecutors eventually obtained guilty pleas or convictions on all of the defendants. However, the Odessa incident illustrates just how difficult it is to stop this sort of activity permanently. In October 2004, just half a year after the meth ring indictments, Odessa police shut down a meth lab operated in an apartment, arresting two men, one of whom authorities said had Aryan Circle connections.

Four years later, in December 2008, federal and local officials in the Midland-Odessa area announced a major meth bust in the region, arresting 16 men and women for allegedly manufacturing more than 7 pounds of methamphetamine worth more than \$200,000. According to police, several of the suspects arrested had connections to the Aryan Circle and Texas Aryan Brotherhood. The Odessa-Midland area remains a major area of Aryan Circle activity.

Organized Crime: Other Violence

Violence to ward off competitors and keep discipline within the ranks is also common in the arena of organized crime. Both types of violence are common sources of Aryan Circle related murders and assaults.

The gang violence occurs primarily within the prison environment. In its over twenty-year history, the Aryan Circle has engaged in a number of gang wars, as well as countless lesser acts of violence directed at members of other prison gangs. While some of these wars have occurred with non-white groups, such as the Texas Mexican Mafia, a great deal of the violence occurs with other white groups, such as the Texas Aryan Brotherhood and the White Knights. One reason for this is because much of the criminal activity of such groups is directed at members of their own race. Thus a racist prison gang will attempt to sell contraband to, or extort protection from, primarily prisoners of the same race. This basic fact pits same-race prison gangs against each other as competitors for the same pool of customers/victims. At the same time, it sometimes allows strategic alliances with gangs of different races (primarily white and Hispanic) — because they are not in direct competition.

In contrast, much of the violence between prison gang members of different races occurs as the result of individual actions; i.e., from the bottom up rather than the top down. A fight or incident between two prisoners of different gangs may escalate into a full-fledged war, as neither gang feels it can back down without losing face in the prison. Regardless of their origin, gang wars can quickly spread from prison to prison (and even prison system to prison system), as gangs get the word out that it is “open season” on the group with which it is warring.

Suspected informants are also frequent targets of prison gang violence. For example, in a Fall 2008 Aryan Circle newsletter, one member wrote about “Teardrop,” a Circle member who “just recently caught his ride to ADX [the federal supermax prison in Florence, Colorado] for butchering a rat!” This is apparently a reference to Timothy McCallister, a federal prisoner at Terra Haute who was convicted in 2007 of murdering another prisoner there, and was later moved to Florence.

Less well known than wars between gangs is the surprising amount of violence that gangs such as the Aryan Circle direct against their own membership. Many of the victims of the Aryan Circle are themselves Circle members and associates.

Perhaps the most common reason for such violence is the suspicion that the Circle member is now a threat to the organization. Sometimes the suspect is thought to be an informant, or thought likely to become an informant, while in some cases it is because the suspect is leaving the group.

For example, in October 2002, Justen Grant Hall, an Aryan Circle district captain in El Paso, was confronted with a difficult situation. Two people, a man and a woman who were part of the group of Circle members and associates who ran a drug house in El Paso, got in an argument with each other that resulted in mutual physical assault. The woman expressed her desire to report the assault to the police. Hall, of course, realized that such an action would imperil

the drug house. His decision—even though he believed at the time that the woman was the victim—was that she had to be killed in order to prevent her from contacting police. Hall killed the woman, then another person buried her body in New Mexico after cutting off her fingers to prevent detection of DNA under her fingertips. Hall was convicted in 2005 for the murder and sentenced to death.

Another woman, Aryan Circle member Dana Leigh Taylor of Kemp, Texas, also discovered the perils of suspicion. In April 2006, two other Circle members, Robert Allen Byrd and Jennifer Perez, grew suspicious that Taylor broke gang rules and might even have become an informant. As a result, Byrd drove Taylor to a remote area, took her into the woods, and stabbed her to death. By the time her body was discovered and identified, months later, Byrd was already in jail in Hood County awaiting trial on an unrelated charge of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and assault on a public servant. In 2007, Byrd was convicted for the murder of Taylor and sentenced to life in prison without parole.

Luckier was high ranking Aryan Circle member Danny Covington, whom other Circle members suspected in 2007 was attempting to leave the gang after 18 years. Four Aryan Circle members — Bryan Aiken, Aaron Blakeney, Blake Hickman, and Joshua Truesdale — were allegedly assigned to kill Covington. However, the attempt did not succeed, as Covington and another Circle member, Bryan Shuler, fought them off in a gunfight in the Fort Worth suburb of North Richland Hills reminiscent of the OK Corral. During the gun battle, Shuler was shot in the hand. Covington fled in a vehicle, but Aiken allegedly pulled up alongside him and shot him through the passenger door, hitting him in his right arm. Blakeney was also injured during the gun battle. However, no one died. The four alleged attackers were arrested on a variety of charges and are awaiting trial.

Another reason for Circle-on-Circle violence is for disobeying orders or showing disrespect. This was the fate of Circle member Roland David Dickinson, whose body was discovered in a ravine in the desert in the Odessa area, in January 2007. Several Aryan Circle members were arrested in connection to the crime, one of whom, John Michael Hays, was eventually convicted and sentenced to 99 years in prison in August 2007. Court testimony revealed that Hays killed Dickinson in retaliation for insulting statements the latter had made to other Circle members about family members of Hays. According to the prosecutors, “this was about Hays getting back his position and his dignity in the Aryan Circle.”

It is quite possible that Aryan Circle prospects would be far less enthusiastic about joining the group if they were aware of the high body count at the hands of the Circle’s own executioners.

Aryan Circle Hate Crimes

Though an organized crime group, the Circle is also a hate group, and its record of violence reflects that hate. Circle members have conducted attacks against African-Americans, Hispanics, gays, and others both inside and outside of prison walls.

Within prison walls, interracial violence by the Aryan Circle is sometimes difficult to separate from its organized gang violence. Not so difficult to separate are assaults on gay or transgender inmates. One such assault occurred in 2000, when convicted murderer and Aryan Circle member James Scott Porter brutally murdered a gay Hispanic inmate, Rudy Delgado, in a prison day room. Porter, with a weapon fashioned from a rock wrapped in a pillow case, hit Delgado from behind, knocking him to the ground. Porter repeatedly struck Delgado's head with the rock until the pillow case disintegrated, then began stabbing Delgado with a homemade knife and stomping on his head with work boots. Porter later admitted having planned the assault for some time. He said he had become a white supremacist because of such groups' hatred of gays and alleged that Delgado had made a pass at him. Porter was convicted of the murder and sentenced to death, a sentence carried out in 2005.

Aryan Circle members have killed homosexuals outside of prison walls, too. Justen Grant Hall, who killed a woman in El Paso in 2002 to keep her from calling the police (see above), was amazingly out on bail for another murder at the time he murdered his second victim. Earlier that year, Hall had killed another El Pasoan, Hector Arturo Diaz, because he was gay and a transvestite. Hall was arrested and charged with a hate crime, but set free on bond. It did not take him long to kill again.

Both victims above were also Hispanic, and Hispanics are also frequent targets of Aryan Circle related hate crimes. In August 2007, for example, a group of young Aryan Circle members and associates led by Stephen Ray Chapman allegedly conducted two brutal attacks on a Hispanic man in the east Texas town of West. According to police, Chapman told them that they assaulted the victim because he allegedly made "offensive remarks" to a teenaged girl. Chapman was charged with engaging in organized criminal activity and aggravated assault with serious bodily harm. A woman, Maria Lee Wooten, was arrested on similar charges.

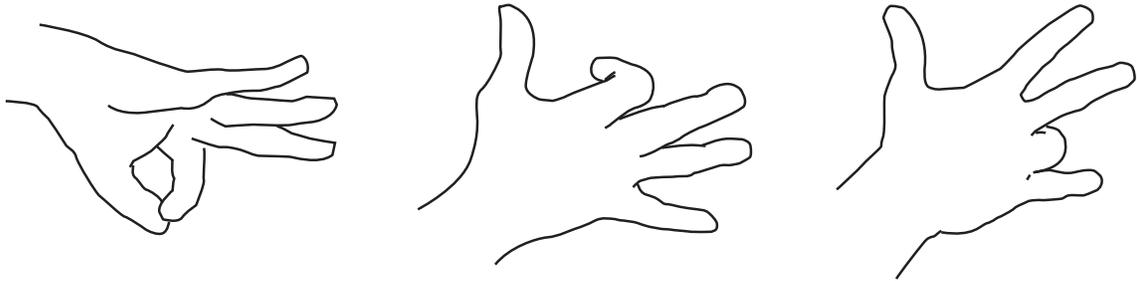
Another Aryan Circle assault on a Hispanic occurred in January 2001, when several Aryan Circle members, including high-ranking member Larry Boyd Wren, were charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon for attacking a Hispanic man in Midland, kicking him and beating him with a VCR. While one of the attackers, Mark Lovell, received a 35-year sentence in 2002 for his role in the assault, Wren, convicted that same year, was amazingly given only a five year sentence. According to the jury foreman in the case, the multi-racial jury gave the swastika-tattoo-covered Wren the lightest possible sentence because they thought he was "not really a racist."

Appendix: Aryan Circle Identifiers & Tattoos

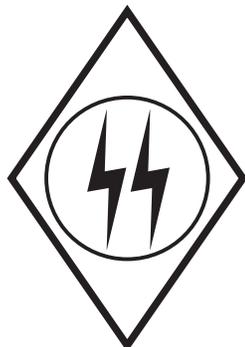
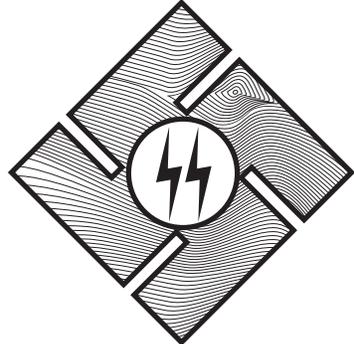
Aryan Circle Codes and Phrases

CODE / PHRASE	MEANING
AC	Aryan Circle
13 (including variations like A13, A3, Lucky 13)	Aryan Circle
!-!!!	Aryan Circle exclamation marks, used in writing (representing a 1-3)
113%	100% Aryan Circle
137	Aryan Circle Greetings
360°	Aryan Circle (360 degrees, i.e., a circle)
Ace Trey / Ace Tre	Aryan Circle
Diamond	Aryan Circle (diamond references are common, as in "he was shining his diamond," referring to a Circle member doing well)
Aryan Family	Aryan Circle
1388	Aryan Circle variation of the white supremacist code "14/88" (the 88 stands for "Heil Hitler")
CFFC	Circle Forever, Forever Circle
3663	Circle Forever, Forever Circle
DFEFED	Diamond Forever, Forever Diamond
ACAP	Aryan Circle, Aryan Pride
Silence is Deadly, Silence is Golden, Silence is Mandatory	Aryan Circle motto
My Honor is Called Loyalty	Aryan Circle motto, adopted from the English translation of the motto of the Waffen SS in World War II
MHICL	My Honor is Called Loyalty
LLHR	Love, Loyalty, Honor, Respect
Loyalty, Brotherhood, Dedication, Solidarity	Phrase on many Aryan Circle tattoos (or "sisterhood" for female members)
One People, One Purpose, One Blood	Aryan Circle motto
C-Note	Aryan Circle Constitution
Ugly Boys	Upper Board
Crazy Boys/Crazy Folks	Center Ring
Leaf	Major
Maniac	Major
Clown	Captain
Amy and her Brats	Aryan Brotherhood (may use other words beginning with A and B as well)
Dweebs	Dirty White Boys
Federation	Federal prison(s)

Aryan Circle Hand Sign



Aryan Circle Tattoos



Diamond Tattoo.

The diamond tattoo is the basic Aryan Circle tattoo or "patch."

It has many variations, including variations for different states.

What the tattoos usually share is a swastika tilted to resemble a diamond, often with SS bolts and the letters "AC" in the center.



Older Aryan Circle Tattoo.

An older version of the Aryan Circle tattoo was a circle with SS bolts inside it.

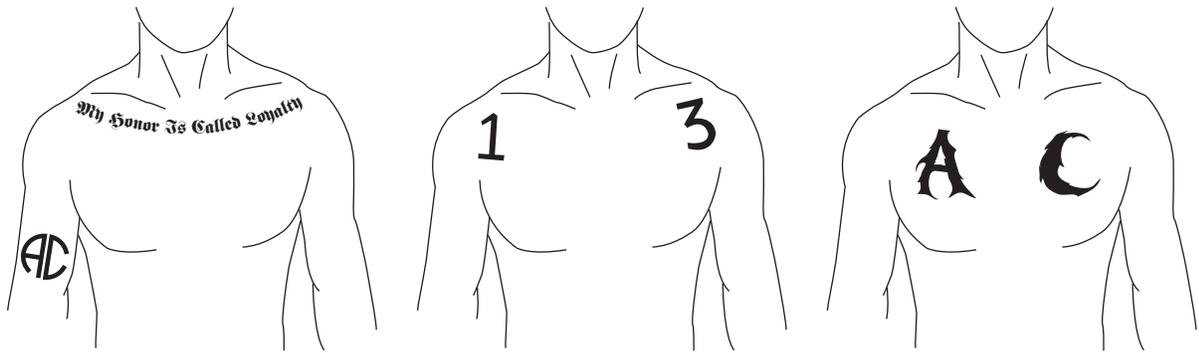
Aryan Circle



One People, One Purpose, One Blood



Other Aryan Circle Tattoos





©2009 Anti-Defamation League
605 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10158-3560
www.adl.org

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved

Copies of this publication are in the Rita and Leo Greenland Library and Research Center