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## HOUSTON CHRONICLE ARCHIVES

**Paper:** HOUSTON CHRONICLE**Date:** SUN 10/31/1993**Section:** C**Page:** 1**Edition:** 2 STAR**Civil war, arrests cooling down area gang/4 of 5 top leaders are in jail or on the lam**By JOE STINEBAKER  
Staff

Members of La Raza 13 like to think they can rely on each other for protection from rival gangs and police. But when that fragile trust broke down recently, La Raza 13 fell into a civil war that resulted in several shootings, at least one murder and the near collapse of the gang.

One month after the war began, the smoke has begun to clear, and police like what they see. Four of the gang's five most powerful members are either in jail or on the run. Many more are in jail on various assault charges. LRZ 13, as the gang is known, has split into two factions.

"I think La Raza, really, they are hurt," said Kim Ogg, the chief gang prosecutor in the Harris County District Attorney's office. "I think the police have done a good job of putting a lot of the La Raza members in jail."

And that makes Ogg optimistic.

"Divided, they'll fall," she said.

Police are not so confident, but everyone agrees the gang has taken a heavy hit.

Police said La Raza 13 is probably Houston's second-largest and second most violent street gang -- behind their enemies, the Southwest Cholos.

Gang members, most of whom are teen-agers of Mexican heritage, rob and steal to make their money and kill to eliminate their enemies.

LRZ 13 is one of two La Raza gangs in Houston, according to gang investigators and prosecutors. They remain friendly with the other, La Raza Folks, but the two are separated by the areas in which they operate. LRZ 13 considers far southwest Houston, near the Fort Bend County line, its "turf"; La Raza Folks operates north of there, in the Gulfton and Sharpstown areas of Houston.

"They primarily fight with the other gangs, to get that perverse type of respect," said Sgt. H.F. Larsson, a gang investigator with the Houston Police Department. "Everything is built around respect, because they don't get it from anywhere else."

Only two months ago, La Raza 13 gang members appeared relatively united. Juan Joe Lucio, the 20-year-old leader, was in charge, surrounded by his four lieutenants -- or "crucifs."

As many as 100 gang members once answered to Lucio, coordinating their activities and their attacks on other gangs through him.

But by late September, one of Lucio's crucifs had begun a power play.

Hector Xavier "Killer" Gomez, 18, who police and prosecutors consider one of the most violent LRZ 13 members, began openly disagreeing with Lucio's policies.

Investigators said Gomez decided to take over the gang, but he had a problem: He was scheduled to be tried Oct. 11 on murder charges stemming from a gang shooting in December.

Ogg said the Oct. 11 deadline weighed heavily on Gomez and triggered his power play. Two of Lucio's remaining crucifs remained loyal -- his brother, Rudy, and Victor Lee "Leo" Suarez. The fourth crucif, 15-year-old Luis Gomez, was Hector Gomez's brother and went with Hector.

Suarez and Hector Gomez argued on Oct. 1 about gang leadership, and the split became final. There were now two factions of La Raza 13, and they went to war the next day.

"Part of La Raza 13 went with the Gomezes, and some of them went with the Lucios," Ogg said recently. "My information is that the split in La Raza came from . . . Hector and Leo having an argument. Leo said it was over the fact that Hector didn't like the way La Raza 13 was being run. I think Hector tried to take over the gang. It turned into a power struggle that was triggered by the Oct. 11 trial setting."

One thing that apparently weighed on Gomez's mind was that Suarez had been subpoenaed to testify at his trial. Now that the two were enemies, investigators said, Gomez probably worried that Suarez would testify against him.

The day after the LRZ 13 split, Suarez and about 20 friends and members of the Lucio faction met for a party outside their headquarters at 6410 Grapevine in far southwest Houston. Rani Adenia Goodgame, 18, and her friend, 14-year-old Jessica Uvalle, also showed up.

As the young women sat in Goodgame's car outside the house, a small red pickup occupied by six teens pulled up, and at least two of its occupants opened fire on the rival gathering with an assault rifle and a pistol. Goodgame was hit in the neck, chest and head and died at the scene. Uvalle was hit in the chest and side, but she survived.

Suarez, who investigators suspect may have been the target, was unhurt.

Investigators had little trouble identifying suspects. They immediately suspected the Gomez brothers and other members of their breakaway faction. Within less than a day, they charged Hector Gomez with murder and attempted capital murder. They are also looking for Luis Gomez.

Both brothers disappeared the day after the shootings.

Until Hector Gomez is arrested, investigators can't be sure if the shootings were an attempt to kill Suarez before he was able to testify at Gomez's murder trial -- but they said it's a good bet.

"I suppose that's a good possibility," said Larsson. "It's hard to believe that they (the girls) were the intentional targets."

The shootings, which were well-publicized, angered Houstonians and police. Within a week, officers had rounded up about 30 La Raza members -- including Juan Lucio and Suarez -- and dropped many of them in jail.

Of the original top five LRZ 13 members, only Rudy Lucio remains free and uncharged today. Investigators are still waiting to see what impact the recent events will have on other LRZ 13 members -- many of whom are the younger siblings of those arrested this month.

"I hope it has a deterrent effect, especially on the younger kids in that group, to see their gang leaders going to prison," Ogg said.

But Ogg and Larsson know that Juan Lucio is still running things from the Harris County Jail. And Larsson suspects that, with the Gomez brothers on the run, the civil war may be over.

"I don't look for that to continue," he said. "I think it's pretty much stopped with this."


Larsson said that some LRZ 13 members offered their opinions to police last week.

"They seemed to think it was just a few guys who tried to go out on their own and caused a bunch of problems for the other guys," he said.

And no hopefuls appear to be waiting to take over the gang, he said.

"I don't doubt that Suarez and Juan (Lucio) will be out on bond pretty quick," he said.

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