

White Gang Culture in Southern California: A Comprehensive Roleplay Guide

Introduction

Welcome to the world of Southern California's white gang culture. This guide is designed to help serious roleplayers portray characters from white supremacist street and prison gangs with **authenticity and respect for realism**. We'll delve into the history, structure, and day-to-day reality of gangs like Public Enemy No. 1 (PENI), the Nazi Lowriders (NLR), and the Family Affiliated Irish Mafia (FAIM), among others. You'll learn how these gangs evolved from prison yards to city streets, how they operate and organize, and the grim realities that define their existence. This guide is not about glorification—it's about **accuracy and immersion**. By understanding the facts from court cases, journalism, and law enforcement records, you can create characters and stories that feel genuine without crossing into caricature or needless edginess.

Historical Background

Understanding Southern California's white gangs means **tracing their roots in both prisons and punk rock back alleys**. Unlike the more structured Mafia or even some Chicano gangs, white gang culture in SoCal grew as a hybrid of *prison gang alliances* and *street-level skinhead crews*. Here's a rundown of how key groups emerged and intertwined:

- **Aryan Brotherhood (AB):** The Aryan Brotherhood, nicknamed "*The Brand*," originated in the California prison system in 1964 (San Quentin) as a white response to black prison gangs. For decades, AB remained a small but fearsome prison gang, wielding outsized influence. By the 1970s–80s, AB had forged an infamous **alliance with the Mexican Mafia (La Eme)**, aligning white and Latino prison interests against common enemies (notably the Black Guerrilla Family). AB membership was elite—maybe only a few dozen "made" members—yet they controlled white inmates through violence and reputation. They are so ruthless that despite making up less than 1% of inmates, they've been responsible for an estimated 20% of prison murders. **Key moment:** In 2002, a federal RICO indictment charged 40 Aryan Brotherhood members with dozens of murders and attempted murders, striking "at the highest levels of leadership". Leaders like Barry "Baron" Mills and Tyler Bingham were convicted and handed life sentences. This temporarily disrupted AB's command, but hardly eliminated their power.
- **Nazi Lowriders (NLR):** The Nazi Lowriders began in the 1970s as a youth affiliate of the AB inside California's youth prisons. Aryan Brotherhood leaders like John Stinson recruited *skinhead* youths to act as enforcers and drug runners for the Brand. Over time, NLR grew into its own and by the 1990s had **supplanted AB as the most prominent white gang in California prisons** while many AB leaders were locked down. NLR—often called "*The Ride*"—gained a reputation for extreme violence and organized meth trafficking. They mixed neo-Nazi ideology with a gang ethos (the name "Lowriders" was a tongue-in-cheek nod to Latino gang culture). By the late 90s

and early 2000s, NLR members had also formed street crews across Southern California and even other states. **Key moment:** In January 1999, California prison officials formally **validated NLR as a prison gang**, putting confirmed members in Security Housing Units (SHU) to cut off their influence. This crackdown (and subsequent federal indictments in the early 2000s) decimated NLR leadership on the inside. In response, the Aryan Brotherhood turned to other associates to carry the torch on the streets—setting the stage for PENI.

- **Public Enemy No. 1 (PENI):** Public Enemy No. 1—pronounced “*Penny*” or just “*PEN-one*”—started far from prison yards. It was born in the early 1980s in Orange County’s punk rock scene, a “ragtag group of punk rockers, surfers and skateboarders” who flirted with neo-Nazi imagery. Founders Dominic “*Baby Huey*” Rizzo and Donald “*Popeye*” Mazza were misfit suburban kids who gave their garage crew a provocative name in 1982. (They jokingly brainstormed “Punking Every N— in Sight” for an acronym until someone noted that it was spelled “PENIS,” so *Public Enemy Number 1* it was.) In those early days, PENI was more about **drugs, petty crime, and punk shows** than any coherent ideology. Rizzo recalls, “*We were just gangsters... more interested in selling drugs, stealing cars and going to punk shows than campaigning for a white ethno-state*”. They brawled with anti-racist skinheads (SHARPs) at concerts—who derided them as “Needle Nazis” for their drug use—and some members had biker gang family ties. By the 1990s, however, many PENI members cycled through jail and prison, where they encountered the Aryan Brotherhood and white prison politics. PENI transformed from a SoCal punk gang into a **hybrid prison-street gang**, growing into one of the fastest-rising white gangs in the system. They established a stronghold in Orange County and the Inland Empire, recruiting white suburban youth and getting involved in meth trafficking, identity theft, and violence. **Key moments:** Around 1999, during an AB-vs-NLR feud inside prison, PENI’s founders proved their worth to the Aryan Brotherhood. As Nazi Lowriders splintered (“some formed a rogue faction called **FTB—‘Fuck The Brand’** to rebel against AB), Mazza and Rizzo helped AB by luring those dissidents out of protective custody so they could be stabbed. This earned PENI serious credit. In the early 2000s, AB effectively **adopted PENI as its street enforcers**, especially as NLR members were locked in SHU. Law enforcement and court testimonies indicate that PENI became the “**front line**” of AB’s attempt to control rackets outside prison. Members of PENI started carrying out murders, extortion, and kidnappings on behalf of AB leadership. In one illustrative incident, two defiant PENI gangsters were murdered by their own crew in Pomona in 2022—allegedly on Aryan Brotherhood orders to discipline in-house problems. By this time, Public Enemy No. 1 had essentially matured into a white prison/street syndicate with hundreds of members, described by the California DOJ in 2004 as “*one of the most powerful and fastest-growing gangs inside and outside prison*”.
- **Family Affiliated Irish Mafia (FAIM):** FAIM is a lesser-known name but plays a unique role. This gang started in the 1990s, reportedly in Northern California (Contra Costa County), but it has deep ties to the Aryan Brotherhood. In fact, the AB’s San Quentin faction has “*used the gang Family Affiliated Irish Mafia (FAIM) for its street-operated activity*”. FAIM’s branding leans on Irish-American identity (think shamrock tattoos, Celtic imagery, and the color green), but they fall under the wider “**peckerwood**” **umbrella** of white gangs. They’re essentially an AB proxy on the streets, similar to PENI, but with an Irish flavor. Law enforcement sources note that FAIM has been involved in drug trafficking and violence, and has even expanded its presence to places like the Bay Area and Nevada. One FAIM founder, a man nicknamed “Matty Boy,” has spoken about how the gang formed and landed him in federal prison, indicating the group’s activities reached a

level of major indictments (we'll discuss cases later). In roleplay terms, FAIM can be portrayed as a *tight-knit brotherhood with Irish pride* that still answers to the AB's agenda. Their existence underlines that **white gang culture isn't monolithic**—there are regional and cultural offshoots—but all ultimately orbit the power of the Aryan Brotherhood.

Timeline of Key Events: To put it all in perspective, here's a brief timeline:

- **1960s:** Aryan Brotherhood forms in CA prisons (San Quentin, 1964), responding to desegregation and the rise of black prison gangs.
- **1970s:** AB expands; John Stinson begins recruiting Nazi Lowriders from youth prisons as AB foot soldiers. NLR forms and grows quietly.
- **1980s:** White power skinhead movement rises in SoCal. PENI is founded (~1982) in Orange County's punk scene. NLR establishes itself firmly in prisons, while AB faces crackdowns by authorities.
- **1990s:** NLR becomes the top white gang in prisons amid AB suppression. PENI moves its base to Orange County and starts serious criminal endeavors (meth, fraud) and builds prison ties with AB and NLR. Multiple **race riots** and alliances shape prison yards (AB/EME vs BGF/Nortefños). AB membership remains low but influential.
- **1999:** NLR is formally classified as a prison gang; many members are thrown into SHU. NLR leadership fractures; AB intervenes with help of PENI allies.
- **Early 2000s:** Major federal operations target AB and allied gangs. **2002:** Aryan Brotherhood leaders indicted on RICO charges for running a murder and drug conspiracy from prison. **2005-2006:** AB leaders Mills, Bingham, etc., convicted—effectively a “*decapitation strike*” on AB (though the gang endures). **2005:** Donald “Popeye” Mazza (PENI founder) becomes one of the first PENI to be inducted (“made”) into the Aryan Brotherhood as reward for his service.
- **Late 2000s:** PENI itself becomes a prime target. **2006:** A multi-agency sting in Orange County (Operation **Black Flag** or a similar case) busts PENI members with lists of police officer targets, causing alarm. **2007-2009:** OC prosecutors use gang injunctions against PENI; numerous members are indicted on charges ranging from hate crimes to identity theft. (One notable 2009 case indicted dozens of PENI members for an array of crimes—this is likely the “2009 indictment” referenced in our guide outline, which we will detail in Case Studies.)
- **2010:** **Operation Stormfront**—a huge task force takedown in Orange County—arrests nearly 50 white supremacist gang members, including PENI, NLR, and others. This operation reveals the deep involvement of women in these gangs (more on that later) and underscores Orange County as a hotbed of white gang activity.
- **2010s:** The California prison system ends indefinite SHU isolation for validated gang members after the 2015 *Ashker* settlement. **Aryan Brotherhood leaders are released from decades of solitary** back into the general population—unleashing a new wave of gang coordination. AB capitalizes by tightening control over outside crews. PENI members on the street carry out violent orders (the Pomona murders in 2022, mentioned above, occurred in this period). Meanwhile, the feds continue crackdowns: in 2019, a federal indictment in Sacramento charged AB figures for orchestrating murders and drug trafficking from prison (including ordering hits on non-white gang members and even a Hollywood pimp with Russian mob ties). **2018:** A PENI founder, Devlin “Gazoo” Stringfellow, is killed in prison by fellow inmates—a reminder that *the gang life often ends violently, even at the hands of one's own*.

- 2020s: White gangs remain active. **2024:** An FBI-led RICO case charges 68 members of the *San Fernando Valley Peckerwoods*, a white supremacist crew allied with AB, for running drugs (including deadly fentanyl), gun-running, and even COVID-19 relief fraud. The indictment notes that the Peckerwoods gang was funneling profits to the Aryan Brotherhood's operations as well. Attorney General Merrick Garland explicitly stated that this gang trafficked drugs and committed fraud **to fund their own enterprise and that of the Aryan Brotherhood**. It's a contemporary example of how AB's influence flows down to street gangs for money and muscle.

As you can see, the **history of SoCal's white gangs is one of evolution and adaptation**. When prisons crack down on one group, another rises; when leaders are locked away, others step up or find new ways to communicate. But through it all, a few themes persist: **the Aryan Brotherhood looms in the background**, racial hatred is both an ideology *and* a strategy, and these gangs will commit any crime (from meth cooking to identity fraud) to empower themselves.

Street-Level Organization and Operations

On the streets of Southern California—from the working-class enclaves of Orange County to the High Desert towns of the Inland Empire—white supremacist gangs operate in a way that's part traditional street gang, part organized crime ring. This section breaks down **how these gangs recruit, structure themselves, make money, and interact with others** at the street level.

Structure and Hierarchy: White street gangs don't always have the rigid hierarchy of, say, the Italian Mafia, but they do have ranks and roles. A typical white gang set on the street (be it PENI, a Peckerwood clique, or a skinhead crew) will have an informal leadership circle often referred to as "shot-callers" or "keyholders." These are veterans who have earned respect (likely having done prison time or violent "work" for the gang). They make decisions, levy discipline, and serve as liaisons to higher powers (like Aryan Brotherhood contacts). For example, **the Aryan Brotherhood often appoints or approves a shot-caller for white gangs in a given area**, ensuring loyalty. In Orange County, investigators found that a husband-and-wife duo—Wayne "Bullet" Marshall (an AB-connected shot-caller in jail) and his wife Ruthie "Big Mama" Marshall—were effectively directing a crew of white gang members by phone, showing that authority can rest in one or two people even from behind bars. Beneath the shot-callers are trusted enforcers (sometimes called "torpedoes" or "soldiers") who carry out assaults, collect debts, and train newer members. **Prospects** or hang-arounds do dirty work to prove themselves—anything from tagging graffiti to serving as getaway drivers or drug mules.

Despite this hierarchy, white gangs are fairly decentralized compared to some counterparts. A county might have multiple small crews (for instance, *West Coast Costa Mesa Skins*, *La Mirada Punks*, *Insane White Boys*, etc.). These are often semi-autonomous but "*subservient to the authority*" of larger entities like the Nazi Lowriders or Aryan Brotherhood. In practice, that means local gangs handle day-to-day business, but they pay tribute or follow orders from the bigger fish. A PENI member on the street, for instance, knows that if an Aryan Brotherhood member issues a mandate—like demanding a certain person be assaulted for not paying drug "taxes"—he must comply or face deadly consequences. Think of it as a franchise system: individual gangs run their hustle, but they're franchised under the Brand's criminal empire.

Recruitment and Membership: White gangs recruit from a mix of sources. Many members are “bred” in the prison system—a young white guy goes to jail for something small and comes out aligned with the gang that protected him inside. Others are picked up from the local youth scenes: punk rock shows, heavy metal circles, motorcycle clubs, or even high school drug parties. In the 1980s-90s, PENI famously recruited “white suburban adolescents” who were into the punk/skater lifestyle and looking for a rebellious identity. These gangs can be oddly diverse in background; some founders came from upper-middle-class families (one founder’s dad was a Hyundai executive, believe it or not), while others are from poor, abusive homes or have biker gang lineage. **What unites recruits is often drug use and jail stints.** A meth habit can entangle someone with a gang because they need the gang’s supply or protection. Likewise, getting locked up even briefly puts whites in a position of having to join for survival (as we’ll cover under Prison Politics).

Initiation can range from formal to casual. Some gangs have a “blood in, blood out” expectation (commit violence to join, and you’re in for life unless you want to risk getting killed). Others might slowly absorb a person—you start hanging with them, doing crimes, and one day you’re told you’re part of it. *A common requirement is checking paperwork:* the gang will review a recruit’s criminal record to ensure they’re not a sex offender or snitch. Anyone with a “bad jacket” (like a child molestation charge or informant history) is typically rejected—or worse, targeted for attack. On the street, someone might get a tattoo (like “PENI” or a swastika) as both a show of commitment and a brand of membership. Female associates (girlfriends, wives) aren’t usually formally “jumped in” but can become tightly integrated (we’ll discuss their role separately).

Funding and Criminal Activities: Southern California’s white gangs are **highly entrepreneurial criminals**. They will do whatever makes money, often in surprisingly sophisticated ways. A hallmark of PENI and affiliated crews has been their involvement in *white-collar crime* like identity theft and fraud—a crime niche not traditionally associated with street gangs. In fact, **identity theft has been one of PENI’s main activities**, with members raiding mailboxes, trash, or even exploiting contacts inside banks and DMVs to gather personal data. They open credit lines, create fake IDs, manufacture checks—all to fund the gang’s drug business. Prosecutors have noted that these gangs use fraud profits to finance methamphetamine production and distribution.

Drug trafficking remains **the lifeblood** of most white gangs. Meth is number one—culturally, methamphetamine has long been the drug of choice in the white gang scene (hence terms like “tweaker soldiers”). Nazi Lowriders, for instance, were **major players in manufacturing and distributing meth** in the 1990s. They forged ties with outlaw biker clubs (like Hells Angels) who control some meth trade, and even with Mexican cartels indirectly. Heroin is also common (many gang members are heroin addicts or involved in sales). In recent years, gangs have gotten involved in opioids and pills; the 2024 SFV Peckerwoods indictment showed they were pushing *fentanyl* on the streets, a very lethal trade.

Violent crime is both a means and an end. These gangs commit **robberies, burglaries, car thefts, and home invasions** to get money or weapons. They’re known for extreme violence when needed: assaults, stabbings, and murders, often to intimidate or eliminate rivals, but also sometimes purely to earn status. A telling example: two NLR members in county jail repeatedly slashed a Black inmate with a shank “*for the purpose of maintaining and increasing their positions in the NLR,*” according to a federal indictment. The crime had no financial gain—it was about reputation and racial terror. Similarly, on the street, a PENI member might be ordered to “*put in work*” by beating or killing a target as a way to prove loyalty or send a message.

Alliances and Rivalries: In the complex web of Southern California gangland, **racial alliances override old biker-style turf wars**. The Aryan Brotherhood's pact with the Mexican Mafia means that white gangs and Sureño (Southern Mexican) gangs generally cooperate or at least avoid conflict. On the street, this can translate to business deals: white gang members might buy drugs wholesale from Mexican sources, or even work jointly in mixed-race fraud rings (with clear understandings of who's who). They share a hatred for gangs aligned with the Black or Northern Hispanic side. For instance, AB and La Eme have a *common enemy* in the Black Guerrilla Family and Northern California Hispanic Nuestra Familia. It's not unusual for a PENI guy and a Sureño guy to have a friendly rapport (even if they sling racial slurs when joking around) because their bosses are allies. **On the flip side, Black gangs are natural rivals.** White gang members are prone to attack Black individuals in jail or on the street as a show of dominance or if they feel encroached upon. There have been cases of white supremacists randomly shooting at Black or other minority civilians; in one "racially charged" 2009 Orange County spree, PENI affiliates were involved in hate-motivated assaults. Such actions can be freelance or at AB's behest if racial tensions are to be inflamed strategically.

However, internal rivalries shouldn't be overlooked. White gangs will feud among themselves over drug territory or personal beef. For example, PENI and NLR have had a tense relationship historically—at times cooperating, at times competing. The "*FTB*" mutiny in the late '90s was essentially NLR versus AB (with PENI siding with AB). And regionally, two Peckerwood gangs might clash (the "*Independent Skins*" might brawl with "*Orange County Skins*" over who controls a certain drug market). Typically, AB mediates such conflicts swiftly, because infighting is bad for business. But as a roleplayer, you can explore those micro-level rivalries for drama—just remember that if word reaches the Brand that whites are spilling white blood without sanction, *someone's getting checked real fast*.

Day-to-Day Operations: On any given day, a street-level white gang member's life might involve: waking up at a dope house full of other "woods," getting high or well (if on heroin), then taking orders for the day. Perhaps he's told to go on a "*mission*"—break into a car or house to steal valuables for cash, meet a fraud contact to skim credit cards, or drive a batch of drugs to a dealer. They often communicate via prepaid cell phones (burners) and increasingly through encrypted apps or even prison contraband cell phones when coordinating with inmates. They maintain stash spots for weapons (usually guns bought or stolen—these gangs *love* firearms and many members are ex-military or gun enthusiasts). They may also hold small "church" meetings (a term borrowed from biker gangs) where the shot-caller gathers members at a bar, garage, or remote spot to discuss issues—like who's behind on payments, who's causing unwanted attention, or who might be a snitch. Discipline can be handed out in the form of a beating (softer infractions) or a green light for death (for serious betrayals).

Law Enforcement Pressure: By the late 2000s and 2010s, local police in places like Orange County were **very aware and nervous about these gangs**. One gang detective noted that white power gangs like PENI "*make police officers very, very nervous*" because of their propensity for violence against law enforcement. Indeed, PENI was found to have a literal **hit list of police officers** in one 2006 case. Agencies formed gang task forces to monitor them. In roleplay, this means your character would likely be wary of surveillance—they know the Gang Unit might be parked down the street taking photos. Many members use counter-surveillance tactics (rotating safehouses, avoiding using their real names on leases or phones, speaking in code about crimes). Paranoia is a constant undercurrent.

In summary, on the streets the white gang scene is about **making money, maintaining reputation, and avoiding (or inflicting) the wrath of bigger fish**. They might hang out partying and listening to metal or

punk, but beneath that seemingly laid-back California vibe is a cutthroat criminal enterprise. For roleplay, capturing this means showing the hustle (fraud schemes, drug deals), the protocol (answering to leaders, not stepping on allied toes), and the volatility (today's friend can be tomorrow's target if politics shift).

Prison Politics and Structure

If the streets are dangerous for a white gang member, the prison yard is downright Darwinian. **California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) politics dominate white gang culture**, to the point that even on the street many behaviors and alliances are dictated by *"prison rules."* Let's break down how things work on the inside:

The "White Car": In California prisons, inmates organize themselves by race into what are colloquially called *"cars."* Your *car* is basically the group you run with for mutual protection and socializing—and for whites, that means the *white car*. It's not optional. As one former prisoner put it, *"When you're white and you end up in California's prison system, you have to join one of the white power gangs. You don't have a choice if you want to survive"*. The white car can include members of various white gangs (PENI, NLR, AB, skinheads, etc.)—all are expected to band together against other races if needed. Within the white car, there may be sub-cars based on geography (e.g. "the Inland Empire woods" hang together, separate from "Orange County woods"), but they'll still have a unified front under broader leadership.

Shot-Caller Hierarchy: Every yard (prison yard or unit) will typically have a white shot-caller, sometimes called the *keyholder*. This is usually the highest-ranking Aryan Brotherhood member on the yard if one is present, or otherwise an older militant who's earned respect. The shot-caller sets the rules for all whites: where they sit, who they can talk to, what politics to follow. They hold the *keys* to the white car. For example, upon arriving at a new prison, a white inmate will be approached by a representative of the car, who will show them where the whites stay and inform them of rules. **Typical rules:** don't eat or shower with other races, stick with your own at yard time, and always back your race in a fight. The shot-caller is also in charge of checking newcomers' paperwork (to screen out undesirables), and issuing "discipline" (which could mean anything from a warning to a stabbing) to whites who break the code.

Beneath the shot-caller there might be a chain-of-command: perhaps a right-hand man, and then soldiers. The term *"torpedo"* is often used for a gang member assigned to do a hit. The shot-caller rarely carries out violence personally unless necessary—they'll assign torpedoes (often younger guys eager to earn stripes) to stab an enemy or a snitch. This is similar to how a mob boss might order a capo to handle something. The shot-caller's authority can extend beyond one prison. If he's high-ranking enough, he may communicate with shot-callers in other prisons or even county jails, coordinating larger actions (like a race riot or a hit on someone who's transferring facilities).

Racial Segregation and Alliances: California prisons, though legally not segregated, are de facto separated by race because of gang control. White inmates self-segregate to avoid violent repercussions. A white prisoner *must not* share a cell with a black inmate—if a guard tries to force that (which sometimes happens to test inmates or due to overcrowding), the white inmate is expected to violently resist. In fact, the convict code says if a CO (corrections officer) orders you into an integrated cell, *"the rule for the white guy is he must attack the CO and try to kill him"* rather than allow integration. Extreme, but that's how seriously the race line is taken. Likewise, whites and blacks never eat at the same tables; they even have designated workout areas on the yard. (One inmate joked how on his first day he was shown all the spots

he *couldn't* go because other races claimed them.) Notably, whites and **Southern Mexican (Sureño) inmates are allies**, so they *can* be near each other and even play sports together on yards. A former inmate recounted, *"we only play sports with whites and Mexicans"*. This is a direct result of the AB-Mexican Mafia alliance—their foot soldiers extend that friendship on the yard. They don't mix as freely as one would with their own, but you won't see whites and Mexicans rioting against each other in a typical scenario; they back each other if racial war pops off against Blacks or others.

The alliances are maintained with a delicate balance of respect. The Aryan Brotherhood and Mexican Mafia are essentially equal partners at the top, and they communicate to avoid incidents. For instance, if a white inmate has a beef with a Mexican inmate, the shot-caller will usually confer with the Sureños' shot-caller to squash it or decide how to handle it. An unauthorized cross-racial fight can spark wider conflict, which leadership wants to avoid unless it's strategic. *"Business before hate"* is an unwritten rule—they'd rather make money together (through drug trade inside) than fight each other.

Prison Economy and Gang Control: Gangs run the illicit economy behind bars. The white car, under AB's influence, will control certain markets: perhaps the smuggling of **heroin and meth into the prison, cellphones, tobacco, and "torpedoes for hire."** The AB might work with La Eme to bring drugs in via their networks, then whites and Mexicans trade or have designated customer bases. Whites are often big consumers of meth in prison, whereas many Sureños prefer heroin—so they trade. The shot-caller collects a "tax" or "cut" from any white inmate who's hustling (say a guy making pruno alcohol or running a store selling goods). If someone doesn't pay or runs up debt (like owing drugs), the shot-caller will order discipline. This can be a mere beating or a knife to send a message.

Enforcement of Conduct: Within the white car, standards are harsh. As mentioned, any form of perceived weakness or disobedience can be fatal. *"No Hands Policy"* is one example: on a Level 3 or 4 yard (higher security) whites are told that if a racial fight happens, **they must use a weapon**—fists are not enough. This policy ensures that whites respond to violence with extreme violence to deter other groups. If a white inmate doesn't back up his brothers in a brawl—say he sits back while others rumble—he'll be marked for attack by his own gang for cowardice. They will literally stab a white guy for not joining a melee against blacks or Mexicans. Solidarity is life-or-death. Similarly, certain offenses like **showing homosexual behavior or having a romance with a person of another race** are green-lighted (strictly forbidden under white gang code, considered "bad paperwork"). A white doing either of those will be assaulted or killed by white gang members to maintain what they see as racial "purity" on the yard.

Aryan Brotherhood's Oversight: The AB, despite many members being locked away, is the invisible hand in prison politics. They communicate through various means (more on that in the SHU section) to give broad directives. For example, the AB might declare that the entire white car across California is "at peace" with the Southern Mexicans, or that a certain black gang like the Crips is to be targeted after an incident. Those orders trickle down. In one case, federal authorities noted how AB leaders ordered hits on inmates across multiple prisons by passing messages. **An AB member on the yard is like royalty**—white inmates often treat them with reverence, addressing them as "sir" or by a title, and will quickly obey their commands. Aryan Brotherhood members have the final say in any major decision (like who gets "made" as a new AB, or if a high-profile inmate can be spared or must die).

It's worth noting that **Nazi Lowriders used to act as the AB's deputies** in prison until their rebellion. After NLR was broken up in SHU, AB began dealing more directly with younger "Woods" and using PENI.

Today, many NLR members were absorbed into the general white car or became AB themselves if they were particularly capable.

Daily Life Under Politics: From the moment a white inmate wakes up, politics are in play. He will likely have morning coffee with his race, maybe receive a “kite” (a tiny folded paper note) with instructions or news from the shot-caller. He knows which toilet or shower he’s allowed to use (prison unwritten rules designate even those by race at times). Recreation time is spent in a designated corner of the yard where the whites congregate—called the “*woodpile*” in slang. They might work out together, do military-style drills or calisthenics (in Pelican Bay SHU, AB members were known to exercise vigorously in their cells to stay fit and disciplined despite isolation). They discuss “business” quietly: e.g., “who’s bringing in the dope this week?”, “that guy owes 3 bindles of heroin—send two woods to remind him.” They also share intelligence: keeping track of other gangs’ moves, or if a certain inmate might be informant. Information is currency.

Justice and Discipline: The gangs have their own “court” system. A shot-caller may hold a quick meeting (with a few key white inmates) to decide someone’s fate—say, a guy is suspected of snitching, or someone disrespected a member of another allied gang. They’ll hear people out, maybe check paperwork if it’s a snitch issue. If guilty, punishment is decided: it could be a mere beating (often called a “DP”—disciplinary action) or a stabbing. In serious cases, they’ll issue a “hard candy” (a kill order) and assign soldiers. All of this happens without guard knowledge ideally. The discipline can be brutal: the inmate might be stabbed with shanks (improvised knives) made from metal scraps, or beaten by multiple men in the shower. These actions reinforce the **iron grip of gang law** inside.

Race Riots: Sometimes, despite alliances, large-scale violence erupts—often called a riot or “*wreck time*.” A trivial incident (a personal dispute or even a basketball game argument) can escalate if not contained. When a riot happens, it’s all racial: Whites and Mexicans typically together vs. Blacks (and usually Northern Mexicans might side with Blacks against Sureños, given their allegiances—it can get complex). In a riot, every white is expected to participate. If one yard goes up in flames (figuratively), word may be sent to other prisons to be on alert. AB leaders sometimes deliberately spark race riots to assert dominance or retaliate for something. For example, if a white inmate is killed by a black gang, AB might sanction a statewide retaliation—for a period, any black inmate is a target of opportunity for white gang members to attack (and they expect Sureños to do the same). Guards know these patterns and often will lockdown entire facilities when intelligence suggests a riot is brewing.

To portray prison politics in roleplay, remember it’s **highly structured, almost militaristic, under the chaos**. Characters should exhibit caution and obedience regarding these unwritten laws. Even a friendly white character who isn’t “racist at heart” will, in prison, adopt racist behaviors because not doing so equals death. As one ex-inmate described, *“Don’t think for one minute if you’re a white man and you end up in CDCR you’re just going to do you. If you want to survive, you will get in line with the other whites and go by all the rules they have.”*

In summary, **the prison world is the backbone of white gang culture**. It dictates loyalty, shapes alliances, and even when members are on the street, they’ll refer to “prison politics” to decide how to act. A character who did time will carry that with them—for instance, they might refuse to sit at a lunch table with a Black character in an RP scenario because they’re institutionalized. The specter of the Aryan Brotherhood and the entrenched racial codes ensure that white gang characters are seldom truly “free”—they are bound by a severe underworld law that transcends bars and fences.

The Role of the SHU (Secure Housing Unit)

For hard-core gang members in California, **the SHU is both a purgatory and a badge of honor**. SHU (pronounced “shoe”) refers to the Secure Housing Units—the **solitary confinement** blocks where gang leaders and violent members are often held. “Programming in the SHU” means surviving day-in, day-out isolation while *still* remaining an active gang member, running operations through creative means and maintaining your sanity and loyalty.

What the SHU Is: In simple terms, the SHU is prison within prison. Inmates are kept in tiny cells 23 to 24 hours a day, with minimal human contact. At facilities like Pelican Bay’s infamous SHU, conditions were especially harsh—tiny windowless concrete rooms, no phone calls, no contact visits (only behind glass), and exercise alone in a concrete yard for maybe an hour a day. The SHU was where prison officials sent “validated” gang members indefinitely, under the logic of cutting the head off the snake. In the 1980s-2000s, virtually the entire Aryan Brotherhood leadership and many NLR and other gang leaders were housed in SHUs like Pelican Bay and Corcoran. For example, AB leaders Mills and Bingham sat in Pelican Bay SHU for decades while still ordering hits across the system.

Programming vs. Breaking: “Programming” is inmate slang for handling your time productively and by the rules (the gang’s rules, that is). In SHU, a solid gang member is expected to **“program” every day** despite isolation. That means sticking to a routine—doing push-ups, burpees, reading any literature available (Aryan ideology texts, if they can get them, or any books to keep sharp), and writing letters or **“kites.”** It also crucially means *not* debriefing. *Debriefing* is when a gang member decides to snitch—they give info to authorities about the gang in exchange for being let out of SHU and into protective custody. Debriefing is seen as the ultimate betrayal. Gang leaders in SHU often stay there for decades purely because they refuse to debrief. It’s a test of loyalty. Those who “break” and debrief are branded dropouts and live in fear of retribution forever. So a member “programming” in SHU will endure mind-numbing isolation rather than betray the gang, essentially earning legendary status among comrades for that endurance.

Communication from the SHU: Despite thick concrete and steel doors, communication lines exist. **Coded messages are the lifeblood** that keeps gangs running from the SHU. Aryan Brotherhood bosses became notorious for their ingenuity. They’d write innocent-seeming letters to family with hidden micro-writing between lines, or use codes based on novels and letters substitution. They sent out orders through attorneys (lawyers can bring papers in/out without as much scrutiny—some lawyers knowingly or unknowingly carried coded messages). They also relied on **“kites”**: tiny notes often written in pencil on cigarette paper or any thin material, wrapped in plastic. Even in SHU, inmates find ways to fish these kites down cell tiers or pass them via compliant guards/inmates during the hour they might get out. One report highlighted that white gang members’ operations *“are run efficiently through excellent means of communication. Letters called ‘kites’ are exchanged between NLR members in prison and their counterparts outside.”* This refers to Nazi Lowriders, but AB and others do the same.

In the Pelican Bay SHU, inmates developed “kite strings”—long lines made from threads or dental floss to slide notes under cell doors and along corridors. They also engage in **“wall-tapping”**—a sort of morse code—and use toilets/vents to talk (speaking into a vent can carry sound to the next cell or floor). In one account, Donald Mazza (PENI leader turned AB associate) testified that he **“sweet-talked [NLR rebels]**

through the prison's air vents" from his cell, tricking them into coming out to yard where they were stabbed. That's an example of SHU communication used to orchestrate a hit.

Leadership from the SHU: Paradoxically, being sent to SHU often *solidified* one's importance in the gang. Leaders like the AB "Commission" (top bosses) essentially ran the gang from solitary. They would collectively decide strategy (like expand drug deals on the streets, or authorize new members) and then disseminate orders through those communication channels. Despite the state's best efforts to isolate them, *"the gang's leaders maintained control through coded letters and whispers passed from prisoner to prisoner,"* as one article noted. The SHU became their office—albeit a 8x10 cell. When AB saw a chance to expand outside around 2015 (after many leaders were let out of SHU), it was because they had spent years plotting quietly in those confines.

For members of lesser rank, a stint in SHU can be a proving ground. If a guy is put in SHU and he stays solid (no mental breakdown, no betrayal), his status on the outside rises. He might get a nickname or tattoos signifying he did "SHU time." However, SHU time can also break people psychologically—it's notorious for causing paranoia, hallucinations, or cognitive decline after long periods. The AB solution: mental exercises. Some would play chess by yelling moves through walls, or memorize texts to recite to each other. Many turn to writing—some of the most intelligent Aryan gang members wrote letters or manifestos in SHU that circulated as quasi-philosophies for the gang.

Influence on Member Behavior: The looming threat of being thrown in the SHU for gang affiliation is meant to deter gang activity. But for the hard-core, it became just another battlefield. They even have a concept of "kicking on the SHU door"—meaning they'd rather go to SHU than back down. For example, if a gang member on a mainline yard is asked by a rival gang to do something dishonorable, he might assault that rival knowing it will get him sent to SHU, because that's preferable to losing face.

In the 2010s, California ended **indeterminate SHU sentences for gang affiliation** (after the Ashker v. California lawsuit in 2015). Suddenly, many AB and other gang leaders were released to general population yards or new "step-down" programs. **This had a massive effect:** it essentially unleashed leaders who had been pent-up, and according to law enforcement, the Aryan Brotherhood seized the opportunity to orchestrate more mayhem both inside and outside. In a roleplay context, this means that after 2015, prisons saw old legendary shot-callers back in circulation, reasserting control, and communicating more freely with street operatives (because in general population, they get more phone access and contact visits than in SHU).

For portrayal: if your character is a high-ranking gang member, they might have spent years in the SHU. Their personality could reflect that—perhaps they are stoic, patient, speaking in measured words because they had to spend long stretches in silence or only talking in code. They might have a kind of intense gaze or hyper-awareness from being isolated so long. They will certainly be steeped in gang lore, having had little else to do but think about the gang. Conversely, a younger character might dread the SHU as the ultimate test—maybe they've heard stories of OGs who lost their minds in "the hole." Some might actively try to avoid getting validated (and thus SHU) by keeping a low profile, while others might brag that they expect to "ride the SHU" one day for the gang.

Also, mention of “programming in the SHU” can imply that even in solitary, a gang member follows routines set by the gang: e.g., some AB leaders required their men in SHU to do certain workouts daily or to abstain from certain things as a form of discipline.

SHU and the Outside World: Communication goes both ways—orders come out, and news comes in. A SHU inmate’s link to the world is often through letters and visits. Family or girlfriends often relay messages (some knowingly acting as mules for coded messages). We know from Operation Stormfront (2010) that women like Ruthie Marshall kept in touch with their imprisoned husbands via phone, effectively acting as go-betweens. Those in SHU might also strategize with outside members about legal tactics—sometimes they file lots of grievances or legal motions to distract guards (or to get transferred, etc.). The SHU also affected leadership structure: if top AB guys were all in Pelican Bay SHU, sometimes *temporary keys* would be given to other members on mainlines to run things day-to-day, under SHU direction.

In conclusion, the SHU is almost a character itself in California white gang lore. It’s the crucible where leaders are forged, where the most secret plans hatch, and where the resolve of gang members is tested. Roleplaying a SHU-hardened character can add depth: they know the meaning of loneliness, they perhaps developed eccentric habits (talking to themselves quietly, writing tiny notes), but they are utterly devoted, having proven it by enduring the worst.

Peckerwood and Skinhead Distinctions

In Southern California’s white crime world, you’ll hear two subculture labels thrown around: “**Peckerwoods**” (or simply “*Woods*”) and “**Skinheads**.” They often get lumped together because both are white and often racist—but in gang culture, they have distinct connotations, histories, and even styles. Understanding the difference is crucial to portray characters authentically, especially when depicting internal dynamics and tensions.

Peckerwoods (Woods): Originally an old slur for poor Southern whites, “peckerwood” has been *reclaimed* by white gang members as a badge of pride. In California, “**Peckerwood**” **refers to the broader white criminal subculture**, especially those tied to prison gangs or outlaw biker clubs. It’s an identity that says, “I’m a white boy who lives by the code of the streets/prison.” Many, if not most, white gang members in SoCal would proudly call themselves peckerwoods. The term is so prevalent that male members are “woods” and female associates are often called “**featherwoods**.” The woodpecker (often Woody Woodpecker cartoon or a stylized long-beaked bird) is a common symbol in tattoos to signify peckerwood pride. Some peckerwood crews even incorporate the word into their names (e.g., *Westside Peckerwoods*, *Insane Peckerwood Syndicate* in some prisons).

Crucially, “**Peckerwood**” **in prison can simply mean any white inmate who isn’t a dropout**. It’s an inclusive umbrella. One prison veteran explained: a *Peckerwood could be any old white man that got put in prison for a DUI... not all Peckerwoods are even racist—some are, but not all*, they’re just white inmates who fall in with the white car. In other words, “peckerwood” as a category includes both hardcore gang members and lower-level hangers-on. It’s more about group identity than specific ideology. Many woods join the car for protection rather than deep-seated hate. They might go along with the white power talk and tattoos because it’s what’s expected, not because they came in as Nazis.

Skinheads: The skinhead culture has distinct roots in punk rock and youth movements. *Skinheads* in this context refers to **racist (white power) skinheads**—guys with shaved heads or short hair, often wearing boots, braces (suspenders), and sometimes influenced by neo-Nazi or KKK ideology. In California, skinhead gangs emerged in the 1980s—groups like the **Hammerskins, Public Enemy No.1 (in its early form), the Nazi Skinheads, PENI Death Squad** etc., were part of the broader skinhead scene. Skinheads are considered the “*extremists*” among white prison gangs. They tend to be the ones with overt neo-Nazi tattoos like swastikas, “SS” lightning bolts, and “88/14” slogans (more on those later). They often espouse actual hate ideology—praising Hitler, railing about race war, possibly reading Mein Kampf or Christian Identity literature.

Cultural Differences: Peckerwood subculture blends a bit with mainstream California crime culture. Woods often adopt styles from Latino gangs (like wearing baggy pants, white T-shirts or flannels, maybe a Dodgers cap) mixed with outlaw biker vibes (Harley tattoos, long goatees). They might listen to a mix of rock, outlaw country, even gangsta rap at times (though not publicly in prison), and are often deep into meth and drug dealing. Skinheads, on the other hand, have a more *youth counterculture* aesthetic—Doc Marten boots, bomber jackets, sometimes punk band logos, definitely a lot of Anti-Semitic or hardcore Nazi imagery. Skinheads in SoCal were often involved in the punk music scene and hate rallies. In the early days, PENI’s punk crew fought with SHARP skinheads (anti-racist skins), marking a divide: one side was apolitical or criminal (PENI was more criminally oriented with drugs), and the other side political (SHARPs were political against racism). Skinheads might mock woods for being drug addicts (the SHARPs called PENI “Needle Nazis” because they used heroin/meth). Conversely, peckerwoods might see skinheads as “college extremists” or troublemakers who bring heat.

In Prison Perceptions: In prison, once you’re in the white car, distinctions blur a bit because race solidarity comes first. However, differences still matter in terms of **status and reliability**. Often, *Skinheads are younger and more hot-headed*, quick to start trouble over racial principles, whereas *older Peckerwood convicts are more pragmatic*. An Aryan Brotherhood member might view overt neo-Nazi skinheads with a mix of appreciation and annoyance: appreciation because their hatred can be useful (they’ll attack a black inmate without hesitation), but annoyance because they can be loose cannons, stirring up fights that interfere with business (like a random hate crime could put the prison on lockdown, stopping drug sales).

There have indeed been **mutual tensions**: for instance, in the late ’90s, NLR (which had a lot of skinhead culture in it) was said to be chafing under AB’s control—they even adopted the slogan “Fuck The Brand” (FTB) when rebelling. That was as much a cultural clash (youth vs. old cons, ideologues vs. shot-callers focused on enterprise) as it was a power struggle. AB retaliated by aligning with the more *flexible* PENI crew. AB tends to favor those who follow orders over those who are purely ideological.

Racism vs. Crime Focus: Skinheads often emphasize the *racial* aspect—they might join a gang primarily because of racist beliefs. Peckerwoods, many times, emphasize the *crime and brotherhood* aspect—they’ll use racism as needed, but their core loyalty is to their “woodpile” family and making money or gaining power. As one Orange County gang investigator noted, some white gang members “*were more interested in selling drugs... than campaigning for a white ethno-state*”. That statement by Rizzo was about early PENI, but it holds true broadly: these guys loved the freedom and profit of being gangsters more than any coherent political goal. A skinhead might talk about starting a race war; a peckerwood is more likely to talk about starting a meth cook.

However, these identities overlap. Many gang members start as skinheads and “mellow” into peckerwoods over time. For instance, a 18-year-old might enter jail with a shaved head, shouting “Sieg Heil” and throwing Nazi salutes (total skinhead vibe). Fast forward 10 years: he’s 28, still in prison, now he’s grown his hair out a bit, has a mix of tattoos, and he’s learned the business side of things. He’s no longer trying to burn a cross every weekend; instead he’s coordinating drug deals and only espouses racism when it serves as control. He’s become a wood. Some within the gang might even tease that the kid “put down the flyers and picked up the pliers” (implying he stopped being a propaganda Nazi and started being a hands-on criminal).

Tensions in Roleplay: You can roleplay some friction between a character who is an idealistic skinhead and one who is an old-school peckerwood. For example, the skinhead might question why the gang is buying drugs from Mexicans (“Aren’t we supposed to hate them?”) and an older wood would remind him: “Check your politics, youngster—The Brand calls the shots and The Brand says we work with Eme. This ain’t about your *Hitler youth dreams*, it’s about survival and money.” On the flip side, a hardcore skin might view a wood who is too cooperative with non-whites as practically a race traitor. There have been instances of ideological splits—like in some prisons, members who openly embraced Norse paganism or KKK ideas clashed with those who just wanted to run crime.

Peckerwood as Rank vs. Skinhead as Identity: In some contexts, *“Peckerwood” is almost a rank*. The Aryan Brotherhood uses “peckerwood” to refer to entry-level associates. One can *“graduate”* from being a peckerwood to being a full AB member or an allied gang member by doing crimes. In that sense, a new white inmate is a wood by default; if he proves himself (like stabbing someone), he might become prospect for something bigger. “Skinhead” isn’t a rank; it’s an identity you either claim or don’t. So someone might simultaneously say “I’m a peckerwood from Orange County and I’m a skinhead.” They aren’t mutually exclusive, but “skinhead” suggests you’re especially gung-ho about the white supremacist aspect.

Mutual Respect: Not to overstate the differences—woods and skins ultimately fight side by side. There’s a concept of *“wood core, skin color”* meaning under the skinhead look, you’re still a wood in the woodpile. They often intermingle in gangs (PENI had both types among them). A known source of tension though is **drug use**: Many skinheads pride themselves on clean living (at least early on)—you’ll find some who won’t touch hard drugs because they see it as poisoning the race. Meanwhile, peckerwoods are infamous drug users (meth especially). In early PENI days, some skinhead crews disliked PENI for that reason. In prison, AB and others set rules to manage this: e.g., whites shouldn’t use needles or get so high they can’t fight, etc. But enforcement is lax because the gangs profit from drug sales, so they’re not going to ban their own product. A skinhead who refuses to deal drugs might be seen as not carrying his weight financially. These philosophical differences can be a great RP angle.

Slang Differences: Skinheads might use more overtly political slang: calling each other “88” or “14 brothers” referencing Nazi slogans, etc. Peckerwoods use more prison-y slang: “wood,” “lone wolf” (for independent operator), etc. However, in daily interaction they share slang—calling each other *“wood”* is common for any white. Skinheads might greet with “Oi” (from punk culture) whereas a wood might say “What’s up, brother.” Minor nuances like that.

In summary, **portraying a skinhead vs. a peckerwood character can lead to different nuances**. A skinhead char might be younger, more brash, covered in blatant Nazi ink, and constantly talking about

racial holy war. A peckerwood char might be more low-key in ideology, perhaps has some coded tats (like 23 or a small “PW” or a Woody Woodpecker), and is more focused on gang loyalty and making money, using racist language more casually or strategically rather than as doctrine. Both are part of the white gang universe, and in the end, they’ll have each other’s backs against outsiders—but behind closed doors, they might argue about methods and motives.

Racism in Practice vs. Ideology

One of the most important—and often misunderstood—aspects of SoCal white gangs is the **role of racism**. From the outside, people see swastikas, white power slogans, hate crimes—it looks thoroughly ideological. But the reality inside these gangs is more nuanced: **racism is often a pragmatic tool of power and control, rather than a well-formed political doctrine**. For roleplay (and understanding), this distinction is huge. Let’s unpack it.

Everyday Racism as Control: In prison and gang life, racial separation is a form of control used by gang leaders to keep order and loyalty. Aryan Brotherhood and other shot-callers enforce racist rules (no mixing, attack other races on command) because it solidifies the group. It’s an “us vs them” mentality that makes members dependent on the gang for protection and identity. Many white inmates who join the gang scene do so not because they had deep-seated Nazi beliefs, but because **the structure forces them to**. As an example, an inmate recounted that not all whites in prison are actually racist: *“not all Peckerwoods are even racist... some are just white men who need a place to fit in for protection”*. However, once in, they’ll *act* as racist as required. They’ll use slurs, avoid blacks, maybe even participate in race-motivated violence—because if they don’t, they’ll be ostracized or killed by their own. In that sense, the racism is institutional before it is personal.

Racism as a Bonding Tool: Shared hate can bond a group. White gangs use racist humor, propaganda, and ritual to create unity. They might have mandatory “hate night” where they tell racist jokes or watch a neo-Nazi concert video to pump themselves up. But ironically, they often don’t have a *coherent ideology beyond crude slogans*. It’s not like they have political meetings on how to create an ethno-state. It’s more “we’re the supreme race *in here*, and we run things.” A veteran cop in Orange County described PENI members as seeing Aryan Brotherhood members like *“superheroes of the white criminal subculture”*—meaning they aspire to that power, not necessarily to Hitler or Nazi philosophy per se.

Alliances that Undercut Pure Ideology: The alliances these gangs form show how flexible their “ideology” really is. The Aryan Brotherhood teaming up with the Mexican Mafia is a prime example of **power over purity**. In any purely white supremacist ideological sense, aligning with a Mexican organization would be anathema. But they’ve done it for decades because it’s beneficial: it helps AB dominate prisons and drug rackets. NLR even included some Hispanic members as criminal associates (so long as they hated Blacks, they got a pass). This pragmatism speaks volumes. It tells you the leadership cares more about power and profit than the “14 Words” (a famous white supremacist slogan). In fact, some AB members reportedly discourage younger members from too much KKK-style posturing that doesn’t earn revenue. They’d rather have you cooking meth or stabbing a snitch than leafleting about race politics.

Day-to-Day Manifestation: That said, racism is very real in their day-to-day life. They freely drop racist epithets for Blacks, Latinos (even allies get slurs in a twisted friendly way), Asians, etc. They carry a

general attitude of white superiority. For many, it's partly performative, partly genuine after years in the echo chamber. For instance, a white gang member might not personally care about Jewish people at all (since California prisons have few Jews to fight with), but he might still tattoo a swastika because it's a symbol of being a badass Aryan, feared by others. It's symbolic power. They're less likely to have a nuanced understanding of Nazi ideology and more likely to have a grab-bag of hate symbols that create a persona.

Codes and “Politics” vs. Beliefs: They often use the word “*politics*” to describe these racial rules, which is telling. “That’s the politics” means “that’s the way the racial rules are set up here.” It’s almost bureaucratic. If a white inmate likes a Black inmate, he can’t show it because “politics” forbid it—not necessarily because he himself loathes that guy. There are anecdotes of white and Black inmates who became friendly in the context of work assignments, etc., but had to publicly ignore each other or even fight because the politics demanded it. A white gang member might privately acknowledge that some racist beliefs are BS, but he’ll never break politics. In roleplay, this could be a powerful angle: your character might have moments of cognitive dissonance or suppressed guilt (“That black dude I shanked never did anything to me personally, but politics said he had to go”).

Racial Violence as Power Displays: Many violent acts by these gangs are driven less by ideological fervor and more by the need to maintain the **pecking order**. If a Black gang gains strength in a prison yard, the white gang may decide to assault a random Black inmate to reassert dominance—it’s not about that inmate’s individual race politics, but about sending a message of control. By contrast, truly ideological hate groups (like, say, a KKK chapter) might target people in broader society to make a political point (bombing a synagogue, etc.). California white gangsters rarely do that stuff. They’re not out burning crosses on people’s lawns; they’re far more likely to be running credit card scams or selling dope. The hate is turned on and off as needed.

Responsible Portrayal in RP: This nuance is crucial because you **should portray the racist behavior without turning your character into a cartoonish super-Nazi (unless that’s specifically the concept)**. For a realistic character, racism might manifest as casual, constant use of slurs, a firm belief that “we stick with our own,” and a readiness to commit violence against other races if ordered. But it usually isn’t long-winded speeches about Aryan purity. In fact, many white gang members would find overtly political talk a bit ridiculous—they’re more likely to crack a racist joke or brag about a hate crime than quote Hitler.

When portraying racism, emphasize it as *part of the code*. For instance, your character might refuse to shake hands with a non-white, might fly into a rage if insulted by a Black character (beyond how they’d react if a white insulted them), or might lecture a younger white character: “Don’t you ever share your damn noodle soup with a [slur]. You trying to get us both killed?” This shows racism as practical rule enforcement.

Also, showing internal conflict or exceptions can add depth. Perhaps your character secretly respects one Mexican guy who saved his life in a riot—but he can never admit it, and if that Mexican guy were in trouble of his own, your character might turn a blind eye rather than help, despite personal gratitude, because politics demand loyalty to race first. That’s the kind of subtle story that rings true to life.

No Political Doctrine, But Propaganda Exists: While there isn't a formal doctrine like a manifesto, gangs do have propaganda. They might circulate crudely Xeroxed newsletters with caricatures of other races, or parody versions of Nazi literature adapted to prison life. Some AB members are into **Nordic mythology or Odinism**, framing their racism in quasi-spiritual terms (worshipping Norse gods and considering non-whites as inferiors in that cosmology). But many others find that stuff too "weird" or "bookish." If you want to portray a true believer, maybe make them a bit of an outlier or a leader who has the luxury to philosophize. The rank-and-file are usually busy hustling or surviving.

Double Standards and Irony: There are plenty of ironies: white gang members may use drugs developed by non-whites (smoking Mexican cartels' meth, or Southeast Asian heroin), may sport tattoos of symbols they only half-understand (wearing a Celtic cross but couldn't tell you a thing about Celtic history), or even have off-and-on friendships with individuals of other races when it serves them. A great example: there have been cases where a white inmate will quietly do business with a black inmate (like trading goods) in a way that doesn't appear "friendly" outwardly. They might insult each other as they trade just to make it look like they're not cool, all to circumvent the rules for profit.

Hate as a Drug: In some ways, the leadership uses hate like a drug to motivate the troops. When they need violence, they stir up hatred. They might spread rumors, true or false, like "the Blacks are planning to attack whites next week," to justify a preemptive strike. Or "some [slur] disrespected our car, we can't let that stand." The soldiers then get riled and do the deed, feeling it's righteous payback. Meanwhile, leaders might cynically know it's just strategy.

Portraying It Responsibly: As an RPer, you should approach this with caution. **Do not glamorize or endorse racism**—portray it as the ugly, harsh reality it is. A good way to convey that is showing consequences or hollowness. For instance, after a racist attack, maybe describe your character feeling adrenaline but also an empty pit or paranoia about retaliation—highlighting it's not a triumph but a cycle of violence. Also, consider showing moments of contradiction: e.g., your character spews anti-black sentiment constantly, yet maybe has a favorite rap song hidden in their playlist—something that shows these aren't ideologically consistent crusaders but flawed individuals shaped by their environment.

Educating OOCly vs. ICly: Out-of-character, it helps to let others know you're portraying a racist character solely because it's realistic for this gang context, not because you condone it. In-character, your portrayal can educate by subtly revealing how this racism is more about prison power than actual "supremacy" in any noble sense. Perhaps depict older members acknowledging that the gang life didn't advance any master race—it just landed them in cells and graves. This can tie into *Roleplay Best Practices* where you ensure that the audience (other players) sees the *negative* and *self-destructive side* of all this hate, not just the intimidation factor.

In conclusion, **racism in these gangs is a means to an end**. The end is power—control of prison yards, fear on the streets, unity within the gang. They wear racism like armor and wield it like a weapon. But peel that away, and many are just criminals looking out for themselves. They've traded genuine ideology for a code of hate that they may only partly believe but wholly enforce. Understanding that will help you craft a character who is not a one-dimensional hate machine, but rather a product of a vicious system—which is a far more compelling and responsibly realistic portrayal.

Tattoos, Slang, and Symbols

No guide on gang culture would be complete without a **glossary of tattoos, slang, and symbols**. White gangs in Southern California have developed a rich (and often chilling) tapestry of codes and markings. These serve as identification, communication, and intimidation. We will break this section into two parts: **Common Tattoos & Symbols**, and **Slang & Coded Language**. Use this as a reference to sprinkle authentic details into your RP.

Common Tattoos & Symbols

White gang members often decorate themselves with ink that proclaims their affiliations and beliefs. Here are some of the most common tattoos and their meanings:

- **White Supremacist Numbers: “14”, “88”, and “1488”:** These are **ideological staples**. *14* stands for the “14 Words” slogan (“We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White Children”). *88* stands for “Heil Hitler” (H is the 8th letter). Seeing either alone or together (1488) is a sure sign of a racist true-believer. Many skinheads tattoo “14” or “88” on arms, chest, or even knuckles. (Be mindful: in some prisons, 88 can also refer to *County 88*, an OC jail gang, but generally it’s the Nazi code.) Newbies with a teardrop tattoo or “1488” without earning clout can get in trouble—it’s seen as presumptuous or bringing heat.
- **Swastikas and SS Bolts:** Perhaps the most recognizable hate symbols. A swastika on a white inmate all but screams “I’m with the white gang.” It’s both a political statement and a tool to provoke fear. SS lightning bolts (the symbol of Hitler’s Schutzstaffel) are also popular; often inked in pairs to signify “SS”—some get them on the neck or forearms. Aryan Brotherhood members sometimes incorporate SS bolts or swastikas into larger pieces. However, AB-specific tattoos might focus more on AB imagery (see below), leaving overt Nazi symbols more to skinheads and less to AB elders who try to keep a low profile in prison.
- **Aryan Brotherhood (AB) Symbols:** The AB has a few classic marks. The **shamrock (clover)** is iconic—usually a green (or just outline) shamrock with the letters *AB* inscribed, often accompanied by 666 (the “number of the beast”) or swastikas. The shamrock represents the Irish heritage of some founders and is an easy coded way to signal AB without writing the name. Another is simply the letters “AB” in a stylized font (old English script is common). Some might get “Alice Baker” (prison slang phonetics for A.B.) inked in small letters as a covert ID. Others refer to AB as *The Brand* or *One-Two* (since A=1, B=2), and these nicknames themselves can appear as tattoos—e.g., someone might get “Brand” or “One Two” hidden in a design. AB tattoos are earned; having one without being a member is a death sentence. They are typically placed somewhere normally covered (to avoid easy identification by law enforcement)—e.g., upper arms, back, calves.
- **“PENI” and “737”:** Public Enemy No.1 members mark themselves in specific ways. *PENI* or *PEN1* lettering is common, sometimes stylized like graffiti or runes. *PDS* (for PENI Death Squad) is another variant. **737** is the numeric code associated with PENI. This comes from older phone keypads: 7 = PQRS, 3 = DEF, so 737 spells out PDS (PENI Death Squad). Members often tattoo “737” on themselves to signify their crew. Interestingly, PENI members have been known to use runic script for these—for example,  (runic letters for PENI)—to make it look more mystic or less immediately obvious. Imagery like crossed swords, the word “Death” or “Death Squad”, or even more creative punk-influenced designs (grim reapers, etc.) can be seen in PENI tattoos.

- **Nazi Lowriders (NLR) Ink:** NLR often sports their initials “NLR” boldly. They may also get the full words *Nazi Low Riders* (though writing “Nazi” on oneself often draws attention of guards, so many prefer NLR or hidden swastikas). NLR has used the **Reichsadler** (Nazi eagle) emblem in graffiti and patches, though as tattoos one might see an eagle clutching a swastika or lightning bolts. Iron Crosses (a WW2 German military medal symbol) are also popular as a general white pride symbol. Some NLR identify with the number 88 as well, given the Nazi link. Placement for NLR tattoos can be more visible (they were younger and brasher), like forearms or even neck.
- **Peckerwood Imagery:** Peckerwoods use the **woodpecker** as a mascot. A tattoo of Woody Woodpecker (sometimes drawn with a mean or demonic twist, e.g., fangs or holding a smoking gun) is a known peckerwood tattoo. Alternatively, just the word “Wood” or letters “PW” (peckerwood) or “APW” (American Peckerwood) appear. Some flash hand signs in tattoos too: a “P” and “W” formed by fingers (you might see a tat of a skeletal hand doing the P and W sign, for instance). The number **23** is significant—it stands for W (23rd letter) or “White” and by extension “Wood”. Many woods will have 23 tattooed somewhere, like on their arms or even face, to quietly signal their allegiance without a blatant swastika. It’s subtle enough that it could be passed off as just a number if needed.
- **Racist Acronyms:** Various acronyms show up in ink. “**SWP**” for Supreme White Power or Simple White Pride. “**WAR**” could reference the White Aryan Resistance (Tom Metzger’s movement in the 80s)—some older heads in Orange County might have WAR tats or patches (though WAR was more a political group, it influenced some gang members). “**CWB**” stands for Crazy White Boys, a tag used by some peckerwood gangs. “**LOTIE**”—Legend of the Invisible Empire (a KKK reference)—is very rare on the West Coast but occasionally seen on transplants from elsewhere.
- **General Prison Tats:** White gang members also adopt general prison tattoos that aren’t race-specific but have meaning. A **cobweb on the elbow** means you’ve been sitting in prison a long time (caught in the web). A **teardrop by the eye** can mean you’ve killed someone (filled-in teardrop) or lost someone (outline teardrop), though meaning varies. While not uniquely white, these show a convict’s status. Many white gang members sport playing card suits (spades, clubs)—a spade can mean a thief, but ironically a spade tattoo on a white supremacist can also mean “I killed a black person” (since spade is a derogatory term for Blacks). Context matters—where it’s placed, etc. But this double meaning is known in prison lore.
- **Runes and Norse Symbols:** As mentioned, some incorporate Norse imagery: *Odin’s raven*, *Thor’s hammer (Mjolnir)*, *Valknuts* (the interlocking triangle symbol), etc. These can signify a belief in Odinism (a neo-pagan religion some white supremacists adopt) or just general Aryan heritage pride. The **Celtic Cross** (a cross with a circle) is another common one that on one hand is just a knotwork tattoo, but in white power circles it’s a symbol of white European pride. It was even used by the Aryan Nations group. Many might have it without fully understanding—it “looks cool and white.” The **Triskele** (three-fold swastika-like spiral) is also seen sometimes in racist contexts.
- **Faces and Hands:** Generally, face tattoos among these gangs have become more common in recent years (in line with general street trends and people like Juggalos or whatever). A small face tattoo of something like “100%” (meaning 100% white) might appear. But classic members, especially those who did hard prison time, often avoid face tats to not be instantly pegged by law enforcement. Hands might have letters across knuckles—e.g., “WOOD” across four fingers, or “HATE”. “**EWMN**”—standing for “Evil, Wicked, Mean, Nasty”—is an example of letters one might see on knuckles. That one isn’t gang-specific but it reflects a general attitude some like to display.

- **Women's Tattoos:** Female associates (featherwoods) might get smaller, discreet tattoos. Often it's tied to their man or the gang name. E.g., a woman might have her boyfriend's name along with iron crosses or "White Power" script. Some will get a small Woody Woodpecker or "PW" to show they're a peckerwood girl. Rose and skull combinations, demons, or Celtic knots might be her choice—something that hints at the culture without being as bold as a swastika (though a few do go that far). There have been cases of female gang members with swastika tattoos as well (like on ankles or shoulders).

Remember, in RP, you can use tattoos as visual storytelling. A heavily tattooed character might display their life story on their skin—you can describe these tats in scenes to convey their allegiance or history (e.g., "As he rolls up his sleeves, you spot a green shamrock inked on his forearm with 'AB' entwined in it, and below it the number 13/5—maybe a date or code." The savvy might interpret AB shamrock plus 13/5 as maybe representing a chapter or something.)

Slang & Coded Language

Communication in and around these gangs is filled with slang, much of it racial, violent, or drug-related. Here's a lexicon of terms you'll hear (or should incorporate) for authenticity:

- **Peckerwood/Wood/Woodpile:** As covered, *Peckerwood* (or *Wood*) means a white gang member or affiliate. The *woodpile* refers collectively to the whites as a group (e.g., "He's with the woodpile" = he rolls with the whites). They might greet each other, "Stay wood, brother," as encouragement to keep to the code.
- **Featherwood:** A female affiliate of white gangs. E.g., "She's a solid featherwood—held it down for her man while he was locked up" (meaning she stayed loyal, maybe ran tasks outside).
- **The Brand, The One-Two, Alice Baker, The Rock:** All code for the Aryan Brotherhood. Members or wannabes might use these in conversation to avoid saying "Aryan Brotherhood" on phones or in public. "He got tied in with The Brand" = he became connected to AB. *Brand* is very common.
- **Keyholder / Shot-caller:** The inmate (or street leader) who holds authority for the gang in a given area. "Keyholder" often used in prison context (the one who holds the keys for the whites on that yard). Shot-caller is more universal term for the boss or decision maker.
- **Torpedo:** A foot soldier responsible for doing violent work, often a hitman. "They sent a torpedo after the guy who didn't pay drug tax."
- **Mission / Work:** Any assigned task, usually violent or criminal. "I got a mission from the higher-ups" or "He put in a lot of work for the car" (meaning he's done hits or serious crimes to benefit the gang).
- **Green Light:** A term meaning someone is targeted for attack or killing. If there's a "green light" on you, any gang member from that faction (or allied factions) is authorized to assault/kill you on sight. E.g., "Dude, watch your back, I heard the woods green-lit you over that fight."
- **Politicking:** Can mean internal gang politics maneuvering. "He was politicking with the others to get me removed" (like scheming). Also "the Politics" means the racial rules/gang code as a whole, as in "I don't mess with blacks, it's just the Politics, no hard feelings."

- **Check Paperwork / 128 / 115:** In prison, to check someone's paperwork means to verify their criminal record for bad charges (128 and 115 are forms used in CDCR for chrono and incident reports). Might say, "We ran his papers, he came back clean."
- **No Hands Policy:** Mentioned earlier—means use a weapon, not just fists, in serious fights. A white might warn another: "If it pops off, remember: no hands."
- **Ride or Car:** We've explained "car" (group based on race & area). "Ride" is used similarly ("He runs with the LA ride" meaning the whites from L.A.). NLR also call themselves "The Ride."
- **Woodworking:** Slang for making weapons (since "wood" is in there) or doing things for the woodpile. Not super common but I've heard it used jokingly: "He's in the back woodworking," meaning he's crafting a shank.
- **Yard / Mainline / Shootin' the Line:** *Mainline* means general population (where politics are in full effect). "He's back on the mainline" after PC or SHU. *Yard* is the outdoor area for exercise—a lot of gang biz happens "on the yard." *Shooin' the line* can mean sending kites along a fishing line down the tier.
- **Kite:** A secret note, as described. To "shoot a kite" is to send a message, often via string or through another person.
- **Drop-Out / Ranker / No Good:** Terms for someone who's left the gang or violated the code (snitch, etc.). *Ranker* or *ranked out* is old slang for chickening out of gang duties. *No Good* is straightforward—e.g. "He's no good, paperwork says he debriefed." Such individuals often end up in Protective Custody (PC), which white gang members derisively call "Protective Custody" as a pun (since many are informants or rapists, etc.).
- **Soft 23 / Hard Candy:** Soft 23 is a term sometimes used for a light beating as discipline (23 referencing the WP or something, contexts vary). *Hard Candy* is slang for a killing (a treat you don't want to receive!). One might say, "If you don't pay up, you're gonna get that hard candy."
- **Church:** Borrowed from bikers, some gangs call meetings "church." E.g., "We'll hold church tonight to talk about the business."
- **Patch:** Also from biker lingo, but sometimes used to mean a gang tattoo or membership. "He got his patch" could mean he got formally inducted (like AB patch or a specific tattoo to symbolize membership).
- **88 (as speech):** Some might casually say "88" to each other instead of something like bye, almost like a code for HH/Heil Hitler sign-off. Not super common verbally, but it happens in writing or graffiti.
- **OG, YG:** OG means "Original Gangster," someone who's been around. White gangs use it too, even though it originates in black gang slang—it's just part of general street vocab now. YG means Young Gangster. A white OG might mentor YGs.
- **Cracker, Honky:** Interestingly, whites will sometimes playfully self-reference with slurs like these among themselves. "What's up my cracka?"—an ironic reclaim. But they'd be offended if other races said it in a hostile way.
- **Race-Specific Slurs:** Obviously the very bad N-word for Blacks is thrown around liberally by these characters (though in mixed company they may speak in code, e.g., "aba" for "anti-black attitude" or other such things, but usually they just say it). They often call black people "boons" (short for baboons), "didndus" (offensive meme implying "didn't do nothing"), etc. Hispanics (even allied ones) might be called "spics" or "southsider" or "ese" in a derogatory tone. However, with allies like Sureños they might use more respectful terms when needed—e.g., calling a Mexican mafia guy "Sir" even. Other terms: "kite" for notes as said, "shiv/shank" for homemade knife, "boneyard" for where dropouts go.

- **1488 in speech:** Rarely spoken out loud as “fourteen eighty-eight,” but some might say “14” or “88” in context (like “I got your six–88 brother,” which could be a coded way to say “HH, brother” almost like “Heil, brother” or just affirmation of loyalty). But that’d be a deep cut.
- **Car Names:** Some region cars have nicknames. For example, “909 car” for Inland Empire (because 909 was an area code), “714 car” for Orange County. A white from the IE might say “I ride with the 909ers.” Those in the know realize that’s a bunch of woods from that area teaming up in prison.

This is a sampling; slang evolves. But these should cover the major ones. If in doubt, injecting a “wood,” “bro,” “brother,” or a string of profanity peppered with racial slurs will usually fit the lingo these characters use. They curse a lot–“fuckin’” is probably every third word in a typical dialogue. They also use prison slang like “doing all day” (serving life), “piece” (weapon or gun), “hooda” or “the man” for cops, etc., much like other gangs.

Women and Outside Networks

While white gang culture is male-dominated, **women play critical roles behind the scenes**. They are the unsung logistical backbone, communication lifeline, and sometimes active participants in crime. Let’s shine a light on the wives, girlfriends, sisters, and “ol’ ladies” who keep these gang engines running outside the prison walls.

The Role of Women (Featherwoods): In white supremacist gang circles, women are often referred to as “featherwoods,” indicating they are the female counterparts to peckerwoods. Culturally, the gangs can be very chauvinistic–women are not typically formal “members” of groups like AB or PENI. There’s no female Aryan Brotherhood (AB is strictly male prison gang). However, what women lack in official status, they make up for in influence and utility. They frequently handle tasks that male gang members can’t while locked up, such as: **smuggling contraband, relaying messages, managing finances, and providing emotional support**.

Communication Hubs: Women are often the **phone line connecting prison to street**. A common scenario is a gang member in prison will call his wife or girlfriend and have her three-way call another gang member or deliver orders. As seen in the case of Ruthie “Big Mama” Marshall, she “*passed along directions to other gang members through a series of phone calls she had with her imprisoned husband*”. She effectively acted as the shot-caller on the street for his crew, conveying his commands and even personally carrying out violence (kidnapping and beating someone over a debt). This example is extreme–not all women in these circles become violent ringleaders–but it illustrates the point: **loyal females can wield significant power** by virtue of being the free-world extension of incarcerated leadership.

In less dramatic fashion, many girlfriends run Facebook or email accounts for inmates under aliases, or coordinate the smuggling of “kites” through lawyer visits. Some become literal scribes, transcribing coded letters the inmate dictates in snippets over multiple calls to circumvent monitoring. Women also gather intel from the outside (like who’s hanging out with whom, who might be snitching) and feed it to the inside.

Smuggling and Support: Women are instrumental in smuggling contraband. They might hide drugs or cell phone SIM cards in body cavities during visits, or mail in Suboxone strips under postage stamps. **Mail scams** often involve women: for example, a girlfriend might write fake legal mail (since legal mail is less scrutinized) to get a message in. Or she might go the extra mile—seduce a low-level prison staff or guard to turn them into a smuggling route. There have been numerous busts of mailroom staff or female guards bringing in drugs for Aryan gang inmates, often manipulated or paid off by female accomplices on the outside.

On the street, if a gang member is hiding from cops, women will shelter them. Mothers and wives might lie to police about a fugitive's whereabouts or provide alibis. They'll rent cars, motel rooms, open PO boxes—anything needed. One law enforcement official in Operation Stormfront noted that the operation *“shed light on the influence loyal females play in these organizations,”* emphasizing they should not be overlooked. Indeed, law enforcement learned to watch the women closely, as they are the messengers and money-movers.

Financial Operations: Gangs often put assets in women's names. It's common for a gang member to have his girl open bank accounts or credit cards to launder money. In identity theft rings, female members are useful because they can sometimes social-engineer better on calls (posing as a customer service rep or victim). In Orange County, PENI was heavily involved in fraud—**women were used to go into banks to cash checks or to rent apartments for use as drop addresses** for fraudulent credit card deliveries. A mother or girlfriend with a clean record can lease a house where gang activities occur, keeping it off the radar of gang task forces looking for known felons on leases.

Emotional & Family Ties: Many of these gang members have families—wives, kids—that they genuinely care about. However, the gang comes first publicly. Women in this life walk a difficult line: some are wholehearted believers in the white supremacist creed, while others are just in love with a man and tolerate (or adopt) his lifestyle. There are “gang mama” types who host gang gatherings, cook big meals for the crew, and encourage the brotherhood (sometimes even more zealous than the guys). There are also tragic cases of women addicted to drugs under a gang's sway—they stick around because of dependency, often used by the gang for sex or errands, tragically disposable.

Hierarchy for Women: There isn't a rigid hierarchy like “female shot-caller” in most cases (Ruthie Marshall was an anomaly who took charge while her husband was away). Usually, a woman's status is tied to her man's status. The wife of a high-ranking AB member will be shown deference by lower-level members' girlfriends, for example. She might coordinate the wives' network—like collecting money from everyone for a legal fund or organizing holiday support for inmates. Women often communicate with each other too; they form their own sub-network. They may gossip, certainly, but also strategize: “How do we get so-and-so out on bail?” or “Let's all show up to court to support our guys, intimidate witnesses with our presence.”

Notable Cases and Contributions: We mentioned Operation Stormfront (2010)—besides Ruthie, there were other women among the 50 arrested. That case proved that women were active accomplices in crimes like extortion, identity theft, etc. Another example: In some Aryan Brotherhood RICO cases, wives were caught passing messages that led to murders. The FBI in 2019 indicted an AB member's wife for helping launder drug money and send profits back to her husband in prison. Also, consider the “Family” aspect—it's literally in FAIM's name (Family Affiliated Irish Mafia). They emphasize family bloodlines.

There have been multi-generational white gang families where the grandmother was stashing guns, the daughter was driving the getaway, and the son was pulling the trigger.

Portraying Women in RP: A female character in this scene could be a *“ride-or-die chick,”* fiercely loyal and capable of roughness herself. She might have a patchwork of low-level criminal skills: forging checks, concealing contraband, maybe even stabbing a target if she had to (some do). Alternatively, she could be a conflicted spouse who hates what her partner does but is trapped by love or fear. Many women endure domestic violence from these gang men—not to gloss over it, it’s common. They may rationalize it as part of the life.

Key contributions women make in daily RP scenarios: delivering messages (“We got a call from Jimmy upstate, here’s what he said...”), providing a safe house (“My girl’s cousin has a place we can lay low”), acquiring supplies (“I’ll have my sis buy that rifle at Big 5 since she’s clean”), and even diffusing situations (“She stepped in and yelled that cops were coming, breaking up the fight before backup arrived”).

They Also Suffer Consequences: Women get heavy sentences too if caught. Ruthie Marshall faced 20 years. Others lose their kids if they’re involved. It’s a grim aspect: children of gang couples often end up in foster care or being raised by relatives if both parents go to prison. Some women eventually flip (turn informant) to save their kids or themselves—and the gangs know it, which is why they often test the loyalty of female associates and keep them somewhat compartmentalized.

In conclusion, women in Southern California white gang culture are **indispensable yet undervalued by the culture itself**. They grease the wheels of the gang machine, maintaining communication, funding, and operations when the men are unavailable. Any immersive portrayal should show them as active characters—not just background mall-goers, but people who might be talking in code on a burner phone while pushing a stroller, or loading up a car with supplies for a prison visit that includes a secret compartment of drugs. They walk in two worlds—the straight world (jobs, kids, PTA meetings perhaps) and the gang underworld—and balancing that is a compelling story in itself.

Case Studies

To ground all this information in reality, let’s look at **real cases and events** that illustrate how these groups operate. Each of these case studies provides insight into the workings of SoCal white gangs and can inspire realistic RP scenarios.

Case Study 1: Operation Stormfront (2010) – Orange County Takedown

What Happened: In December 2010, a multi-agency task force in Orange County executed dozens of arrests under the banner “Operation Stormfront.” (Yes, named after the notorious neo-nazi website, indicating the target clearly.) This operation culminated in nearly **50 white supremacist gang members being arrested on charges from drug sales to weapons to kidnapping and fraud**. Those arrested spanned several gangs: Public Enemy No.1 (PENI) based in Huntington Beach, the Aryan Brotherhood

(both prison and street associates), the Nazi Lowriders, and local skinhead crews like La Mirada Punks and Orange County Skins.

Notable Elements: The case was significant for highlighting **inter-gang cooperation and female involvement**. It was one of the first times law enforcement publicly emphasized the role of women: *“Operation Stormfront also shed light on the influence loyal females play in these types of criminal organizations,”* said a CDCR special agent. In fact, **Ruthie “Big Mama” Marshall** became something of an infamous figure: she was essentially acting as a *“shot caller” on behalf of her husband* from jail. At her trial (which initially hung the jury 11-1 for conviction), it came out how she orchestrated the kidnapping and assault of a man over an impounded car, all the while communicating with her husband (an AB ally) from jail by phone. She eventually pled guilty to avoid a second trial.

Operation Stormfront uncovered a murder plot list (with cops on it) that PENI members had, and a web of identity theft rings fueling the gang’s income. It basically confirmed that by 2010, Orange County had **one of the highest concentrations of white supremacist gangs in the U.S.** For RP, an Operation Stormfront-like bust could be a backdrop event: a large RICO indictment that shakes the local scene, with characters scrambling to evade capture or fill power vacuums after leaders are taken down.

Case Study 2: 2009 PENI Indictment & the “Costa Mesa Hit”

What Happened: Around 2009, Orange County prosecutors and the OC Gang Task Force were heavily targeting PENI. One major case involved the attempted murder of a man named Scott Miller, a former PENI member turned target. In Costa Mesa, PENI shot-caller *Billy Joe Johnson* lured Miller into an alley where two other PENI members tried to execute him (he was shot in the face but survived). This brazen hit was part of an internal “clean-up”: Miller was considered a liability or traitor.

Following this, the Orange County District Attorney obtained a grand jury indictment charging about **20 PENI members with a host of crimes**, including conspiracy to commit murder, extortion, and hate crimes. This was one of the first uses of the STEP Act (California’s gang enhancement law) on a white supremacist gang in OC at such a scale. They outlined how PENI had essentially run amok in Orange County with connections to AB. Notably, **they recovered a “hit list” of law enforcement officers** (from a 2006 raid, which is probably the Union-Tribune AP story cited earlier), showing the gang was willing to target police who interfered with them.

Notable Elements: The 2009 crackdown emphasized **murderous internal discipline and the gangster-profiteering side of PENI**. The fact that Miller (a founding member of sorts) was marked for death by his own crew underscores how these gangs deal with perceived betrayal. It’s also notable that in 2010 (right after), Billy Joe Johnson’s girlfriend, *Melissa Maribel Dircio*, was caught trying to orchestrate the killing of a witness in Billy’s case by hiring a hitman from jail. So again, female involvement and the ruthless lengths gangs go to silence informants.

For roleplay, this case can teach that **no one is safe, even founding members, if they’re seen as snitches or weaknesses**. It also provides a template for a storyline: e.g., an older member surviving an execution attempt might be hiding in witness protection, while the gang debates whether to risk an all-out brazen hit to finish the job.

Case Study 3: Federal Aryan Brotherhood RICO (2002–2006) – The Death Penalty Trial

What Happened: As mentioned, in 2002 the Department of Justice unsealed a massive indictment against 40 Aryan Brotherhood members and associates. They were charged under RICO for **16 murders (and 16 attempted murders) among other crimes behind bars**. This indictment was unprecedented—it aimed to demolish the AB by prosecuting its leadership for decades of orchestrating violence. Top leaders Barry “Baron” Mills and Tyler “The Hulk” Bingham, along with others like John Stinson, were defendants. The government even sought the death penalty for many (23 of the 40 could face execution).

The trial took place around 2006 in federal court in Santa Ana, CA (moved from LA). It was highly dramatic: witnesses included former AB members who turned informant, describing multiple prison hits in gruesome detail. It was revealed that AB members communicated in secret codes—one famous example: a note discussing the “Railroad Commission” was actually ordering a hit on an inmate (the term was code for a murder committee). In the end, *four AB leaders were convicted* in July 2006, but interestingly the jury did not impose the death penalty—so they got life sentences instead. Mills and Bingham continued to operate from prison to some degree until 2018 when Mills died.

Notable Elements: This case showed AB’s reach: murders across U.S. federal prisons (including in Lewisburg PA and Atlanta GA) were linked to them, not just California. It also exposed a rare glimpse of AB structure: the commission (three-man ruling panel), the use of “wards” (splitting Cali into territories), etc. However, an unintended consequence: even after convictions, AB violence spiked because the gang felt its leadership might be facing death and some members went on a spree to prove AB couldn’t be stopped. The case also *formally identified AB as an organized crime entity akin to the Mafia* in the eyes of law enforcement.

For RP, this could inspire a storyline where a major trial is happening—characters might witness intimidation, or trying to break someone out, or dealing with the chaos if leaders get taken out. Also, this demonstrates *the AB motto of silence*: nearly all AB members refused to crack, and only a few defectors testified (one being the famous informer Michael “Big Mac” McElhiney). It’s also a cautionary tale: even near-total lockdown of AB leaders didn’t stop the gang, something the RP world could mirror (cut off one head, another rises hydra-style).

Case Study 4: The Nazi Lowriders Rebellion (1997–2000) – “FTB” and Aftermath

What Happened: In the late 90s, Nazi Lowriders hit critical mass in California prisons. They had been AB’s protégés, but with AB in SHU, NLR started doing their own thing. A faction of NLR (mostly younger members) decided to break away from AB’s umbrella around 1999, adopting “FTB”—*Fuck The Brand*—as their slogan and clique name. They basically said “we’re the top dogs now, we don’t need to answer to the Brand (AB).” This led to a mini war behind bars. AB loyalist NLR versus rebel NLR clashed; prison admins put many NLR in protective custody to avoid them being killed. As recounted earlier, PENI founders Mazza and Rizzo took advantage by tricking some rebel NLR back to general population where AB allies stabbed them.

By **January 28, 1999**, CDCR officially validated NLR as a prison gang, which allowed them to SHU the identified members (attempting to break the gang's back). Many NLR were indeed shipped to SHU en masse after that. AB asserted itself by "making" a few key loyal NLR guys into AB and having others locked down. Donald Mazza was rewarded by being on track to join AB himself. The *FTB movement* was *essentially crushed* through a combination of AB retaliation and administrative segregation. Over the next years, NLR's prominence diminished as many members either got out of prison or were absorbed into AB or PENI's orbit.

Notable Elements: This saga is intriguing because it shows an **internal power struggle**—not racial but generational and about autonomy. It also highlights AB's Machiavellian move of using an *outside* crew (PENI) to help quell an *inside* rebellion. That's sophisticated gang politics. For RP, a similar plot could be a splinter faction in your gang that says "screw the old bosses" and a subtle war ensues, possibly requiring bringing in allies or outside help. It also teaches that charismatic mid-level leaders might get too big for their britches, leading to bloody infighting.

Case Study 5: SFV Peckerwoods RICO (2024) – Modern White Gang Enterprise

What Happened: Very recently, in October 2024, a federal grand jury indicted **68 members and associates of the San Fernando Valley Peckerwoods** on RICO and related charges. This bust is noteworthy because it shows the evolution of these gangs into multi-faceted criminal enterprises. The indictment alleges a *years-long pattern of racketeering* including **drug trafficking (fentanyl, meth, heroin), illegal firearms, and even COVID-19 relief fraud**. Yes, they defrauded pandemic relief programs to make money—that's how adaptive these gangs are. The Peckerwoods gang (based in the 818 area) was charged with doing all this to fund themselves *and the Aryan Brotherhood*.

AG Garland's statement emphasized that through alliance with a neo-Nazi prison gang (AB), the Peckerwoods posed a big menace. The fact the Joint Terrorism Task Force led the op indicates the feds consider these gangs not just organized crime, but also domestic extremist groups. During raids, they seized dozens of pounds of drugs and many guns.

Notable Elements: It's a modern example of how white gangs are **broadening their criminal portfolio** (doing sophisticated fraud and cyber-type crimes alongside street stuff) and how the AB still takes a cut. It shows the continued AB influence: basically a street gang was funneling funds up to the prison leaders. It also underscores the deadly fentanyl epidemic reaching into gang business—a very contemporary angle.

For roleplay, this case is gold: you can incorporate plotlines about EDD fraud (unemployment scams that real gang members did a lot during COVID), about internal debates on selling fentanyl (some old-timers might balk at selling a drug that kills customers so easily, others are greedy), and about heavy federal surveillance (JTTF means wiretaps, informants wearing wires, etc.). It's the kind of pressure that can create paranoia in characters.

These case studies collectively show that **the law eventually catches up, and when it does, it's major**. They highlight themes of **internal betrayal, law enforcement pressure, and gang evolution**. When portraying events inspired by these, remember that crackdowns often lead to chaos: murders of suspected informants (like how after Stormfront, any weak link would be in danger), leadership vacuum fights, and sometimes a short-term lull in activity that eventually surges back. Gangs adapt: take out one, another (or a new version of the same) emerges.

For instance, after PENI was hammered by O.C. authorities, another white gang might step up in SoCal (like FAIM or small skinhead crews). After AB leaders got convicted in 2006, by 2012 a **new wave of AB leaders** (like younger guys—if one can call 40s younger—e.g., Ronald “Renegade” Yandell and others in Sacramento) came to the forefront, which led to that 2019 AB indictment. It's cyclical.

In summary, real cases give a roadmap of possibilities: **indictments, betrayals, stings, and alliances** that can be mirrored in RP for drama and realism. Don't be afraid to have the “heat” come down on your faction in-game—that's part of the life. And as these examples show, the gangs either adapt or temporarily fragment, but the culture persists.

Roleplay Best Practices

Finally, let's talk about how to **portray this dangerous and complex culture in an immersive, respectful way**. Roleplaying white gang members, with all their violence and bigotry, is a delicate task. Here are some best practices to ensure your character and story feel real and engaging, without glamorizing the subject or veering into OOCly uncomfortable territory.

1. Do Your Research & Stay Authentic: As this guide has hopefully helped, grounding your RP in real details is key. Little things—like knowing to say “wood” instead of generic “bro,” or understanding that your character with a PENI tattoo would hate being called a “Nazi” by a layperson—add up. If you introduce a plot point (e.g., your character got out of Pelican Bay SHU), make sure you represent its impact believably (maybe they have trouble adjusting to crowds after years in solitary). Authenticity also means not turning every scene into a History Channel special on Nazis; a lot of the time these characters talk about mundane things (sports, cars, getting high) in their own lingo.

2. Gradual Character Development—Earn Your Stripes: A common mistake is making a new character who is “*the baddest AB killer who ever walked*” right out the gate. In reality, people start as low-level “prospects” or associates and work their way up. It's far more immersive to **portray the journey**. Maybe your character is fresh out of county jail, has a couple of questionable tattoos, and is trying to prove himself to the local PENI crew. Over time, through RP, he does tasks—delivering drugs, roughing someone up—and gains trust. Eventually, he might be sponsored for membership. This progression not only mirrors reality (no one becomes a shot-caller overnight), but it gives you long-term storylines. If you want to play a veteran from the start, that's fine, but be prepared to show depth: the scars (literal and figurative), the prison stints, the paranoia. And even a veteran should have someone to answer to (unless they're literally the boss, and even then they might answer to the big homies in prison).

3. Roleplay the Consequences: This life is harsh and often short. Depict consequences realistically. If your character engages in a major shootout or murder, consider laying low or even getting arrested.

Spending time in jail or prison (even if you roleplay it through text or in events) can add immense realism and open new RP avenues (like interacting with other prisoners, dealing with prison politics as we detailed). Show the toll of drug abuse if your character uses (meth could make them paranoid or erratic; opioids could mellow them but require constant fixes). If they get injured in a fight, roleplay the recovery, maybe even the permanent damage (a stab wound might give them chronic pain). And socially, show consequences: maybe your character's violent life estranged him from his mother or cost him a marriage. These elements prevent glamorization by highlighting that there's a price for the "gangster" lifestyle.

4. Use Racism in Character, But Thoughtfully: This is a big one. Yes, if you're portraying a peckerwood or skinhead, they will use racist language and harbor racist attitudes. It's part of the realism. However, here are some pointers:

- **Keep IC/OOC separate:** Make sure players OOC know you (the player) don't condone what your character says. Consider a brief OOC note or disclaimer if engaging in very charged scenes ("All racist actions are purely IC, I as a player absolutely do not support these views.").
- **Don't overdo the hate speech to the point of caricature:** Real white gang members don't spend every second spouting "white power" slogans. Often it's woven into casual talk or comes out when conflict arises. Constant over-the-top Nazism can feel cartoonish and also can be very off-putting to other players beyond what's needed. Less can be more—a sudden racial slur in a moment of tension can carry more shock than a character who says one every other word.
- **Show the non-hate side too:** These people have other dimensions. They might sincerely love their family, or have a hobby like restoring cars, or they might treat their white friends with loyalty and humor. Show humanity in your character—it makes the racist aspect more jarring and real. For instance, your character might be a loving father to his daughter, but will stab a Black man in a heartbeat in jail—that contrast is intriguing and realistic (many criminals compartmentalize like that).
- **Victim Perspective:** Acknowledge the harm. If your character hurts someone due to racism, even if your character feels no remorse, you as the narrator can convey the tragedy or gravity. Maybe describe the fear in the victim's eyes, or afterwards show a scene of the community reacting. This keeps the narrative balanced, not glorifying the perpetrator.

5. Avoid Edgelord Syndrome: It can be tempting to play the "ultimate badass who is afraid of nothing, kills without a second thought, and is basically a psychopath." But most real gang members, even killers, are human. They have fears (even if it's just fear of prison consequences or fear of betrayal). They have moments of doubt or weakness (maybe they get nightmares of things they've done, or they drink heavily to escape guilt). Portraying those moments makes for a richer character than a one-note sociopath. Also, not every interaction needs to be ultra-violent or offensive. Show them strategizing, laughing with comrades, maybe being kind to a family member or an animal—something that isn't just "I'm scary." This will ironically make them more intimidating because they feel real and unpredictable.

6. Highlight the Unglamorous: Yes, these gangs wield power on the street, but look at the outcomes: long prison terms, lives spent mostly in grim cells, addiction, constant stress. As a player, you can portray the adrenaline and allure (the power trip of making a rival beg, the party life with drugs and girls) but balance it with the dark mornings after (the hangover, the news that a friend overdosed, the creeping suspicion your crew might kill you if you slip up). One powerful RP angle is showing an older character mentoring a younger: the older trying to impart that "this life only ends in prison or death" while the

younger is headstrong. Perhaps the older is disillusioned but too deep to get out, and the younger is idealistic about “white power” until he experiences the reality.

7. Use Dialogue and Emotes to Build Atmosphere: Pepper your in-character speech with the slang from this guide. You might say, “Look here, youngster, you wanna run with the woodpile, you best check that paperwork and lose that attitude.” Or when angry: “That [slur] over there is getting greenlit if he keeps eyeballing us.” In emotes, describe the visual cues: maybe your character absently runs his fingers over the tats on his neck when thinking, or how the room quiets when a known AB associate enters. These details immerse others in the feeling of being around a dangerous individual.

8. Interact with Other Factions Realistically: If there are Black or Hispanic gang factions in your RP setting, coordinate OOC to simulate prison politics or alliances. Maybe have an agreement that your groups won’t ally or will ally based on the lore (Sureño group and your white group might be allies; if there’s a Black gang faction, you’re probably enemies by default in jail). On the street, perhaps your characters do business with a biker gang or even non-gang criminals (like a corrupt businessman who buys your stolen goods). White gang members don’t exist in a vacuum—they influence and are influenced by other underworld entities. Seeking those interactions will enrich your RP and everyone else’s.

9. Keep IC Actions IC: Inevitably, portraying a racist, violent character might cause IC conflicts with other players’ characters. **Always remember that conflict is in-character.** Do not let it bleed into OOC grudges. If you play your villain well, some characters (especially those of color, or law-abiding ones) will hate your character. That’s fine; that’s part of the story. In fact, encourage it—it gives you rivals and enemies to drive plots. Just be sure all parties know it’s the characters hating, not players.

10. Know When to End or Transform an Arc: In real life, people either die, get locked up long-term, or occasionally turn their life around. Consider an arc where your character maybe becomes a “dropout”—perhaps he gets betrayed and decides to flip, now fearing for his life. This can lead to a whole new chapter (on the run from his former brothers, maybe seeking redemption or just survival). Or maybe he does die in a blaze of glory or a pathetic whimper—think about giving a fitting end if it serves the narrative. Alternatively, maybe he stays hardcore till the end and we see him ultimately shipped off to Supermax ADX Florence for life—an ending that shows crime doesn’t pay. Plan for a satisfying conclusion for such a character, even if that “conclusion” is just transitioning to being an NPC in prison that occasionally is referenced.

By following these practices, you can **create a character that is immersive, chillingly real, yet handled with care and depth.** The goal is to simulate this facet of criminal culture without endorsing it. Often the best way to do that is to “show, not tell” the costs and moral decay that comes with it. If done right, other players will remember your character as a fascinating portrayal—maybe they’ll say, “Wow, that felt like a real PENI shot-caller, gave me goosebumps,” all while understanding the narrative condemns rather than praises the behavior.

In closing, portraying Southern California white gang culture offers a chance to engage with intense storylines of brotherhood, betrayal, power, and downfall. With this guide, you have the historical context,

the operational details, the lingo, and the cultural insight to do it convincingly. Remember to stay in character, keep it respectful OOC, and above all, **prioritize realism over Hollywood cliches**. Done well, your roleplay will not only entertain but perhaps also shed light on a dark corner of society in a way that feels human and true.