

## CONVICT SAYS HE'S NOT LEADER OF NOTORIOUS GANG

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Anthony Viramontez says he isn't looking for trouble.

He's got plenty -- and his situation isn't improving with police saying he's the leader of the **Latin Counts**, a suddenly notorious southwest Detroit gang.

"The **Latin Counts**, whatever they call themselves, that's their own doing," Viramontez, 20, said Monday night in an interview at the Wayne County Jail. "I don't get involved with that because I got my own problems."

Gang activity "is all in the past for me; that's long gone," Viramontez said. "I'm just trying to do my time and get on with my life .... I don't want to be the so-called leader of a gang."

"I would like for the cops, the lawyers, the prosecutors, the parents, the community leaders, the business sector, the reporters to stop using my name for their satisfactual needs," Viramontez said.

"As his attorney, Charles Murphy, monitored the interview, Viramontez discussed how he was "banned from Chicago" by police because of feuding between the **Latin Counts** and other gangs.

Viramontez has a record as an adult and a juvenile for involvement in shootings and assaults.

He will be sentenced April 12 after pleading guilty last week to felonious assault for attacking another young man with a brick. He already faces three years in prison for reckless use of a firearm and possession of a gun during a felony.

Attorney Murphy acknowledges that recent publicity about southwest side gang violence and links between Viramontez and the **Latin Counts** could cause the judge to set a longer sentence. "The violence -- it doesn't help. Tony, nor the community," he said.

Murphy and Viramontez said most of the 100-plus youths identified by police as **Latin Counts** really are not official members of the gang and simply used the gang name with the worst reputation.

Viramontez said he, his younger brother Octavio (Bootis) Viramontez and four other young men were members of the **Latin Counts** in Chicago but came to Detroit in 1988 to escape gang warfare. It seemed natural to set up a Detroit chapter as a way to protect one another, he said.

"When we came to Detroit, it was like heaven; in Chicago it was hell," Viramontez said, "because you don't have to duck and dodge nobody here."

Octavio Viramontez, 16, was killed in a drive-by shooting in Detroit on Dec., 23, while Tony was jailed awaiting trial. Viramontez said he was disappointed when police refused to let him attend the funeral under guard.

A tall, muscular man, Viramontez has a long, thick scar from his right ear to the base of his neck that he said was made by surgeons repairing his chin from a gunshot wound in 1985 or 1986 in Chicago.

"I got my a-- whupped and I got mad," he said. "I went back and there was a shoot-out. I was in the wrong territory at the wrong time."

Asked whether southwest Detroit residents have reason to fear gangs, he said, "Maybe they watch too many movies."

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