

**Lisa Taylor-Austin, MS Ed., NCC, LPC**  
Gangologist • Expert Witness • Professional Counselor  
Providing Training to Professionals and the Community on Gang Issues

## **"Gang Expert Winning Praise"**

### **A Roth High School Graduate is one of only a few experts on gang life**

**by Travis Anderson**

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When the American Civil Liberties Union wanted an expert to determine whether Texas residents were gang members, it turned to Lisa Taylor-Austin of Henrietta.

The case involved eight teen-agers who were charged in the state's first gang-injunction case. Taylor-Austin's job was to look at the evidence and how it was collected, and determine whether the young men were, indeed, gang members.

"A gang injunction is when the court makes it illegal for specific people to congregate in public for any reason" she explained. "For example, if Joe and Mark and Tom are friends and they are court-ordered in a gang injunction, then they cannot walk down the street together, ride bikes together, or sit on a front step of a house together. They would be breaking the law to do so."

Taylor-Austin is one of only a handful of gang experts in the nation. She is often called on to lend an opinion or testify in court about the behavior of gang members.

Ann del Llano was one of eight attorneys representing the defendants in the Texas case. She said she learned about Taylor-Austin after seeing the consultants' website at [www.gangcolors.com](http://www.gangcolors.com) "She pointed out a lot of flaws in the Austin Police Department gang unit's theories," del Llano said. "I will say, in all honesty, she knows more about gangs than the Austin Police Department. I'm really not kidding - she knows a lot more." The district attorney wound up dropping the case.

Taylor-Austin, a 1978 graduate of Roth High School, received her master's degree in counseling from SUNY Brockport. She then moved to the Los Angeles where she worked in two high schools.

"Initially my job was to help them through high school, but as I gained their trust, they would talk with me about personal problems they were having as well," she said. "In one high school where I worked, we had a gang-related shooting in which three youths were hit. I assisted with gang truce negotiations and counseling gang members and other students through the tragedy."

With the help of her website, she operates her business, Taylor-Austin Consulting, out of her Henrietta home. She said she know of "probably three people who do this in the entire country."

Taylor-Austin spent nearly six years living in Los Angeles before moving back here in 1994. She enjoys being able to feel safe if she wants to go outside and take a walk.

"To be quite honest, I came back here because Los Angeles is a very stressful place to live," she said. "It's not like Rochester, where there's the city, the suburbs and the rural countryside. You could drive from Syracuse to Buffalo and still be in Los Angeles."

She said she doesn't see much evidence of gangs in the Rochester suburbs. "We don't see that kind of gang activity here," she said. "You'd see it in New York City and Buffalo."

Taylor-Austin said many cities that have a gang activity have a highly transient population. "There are often 'turf' struggles because of this," she said. "We see a large gang explosion in cities that have military bases, as well. This is due to gang members - military personnel and their children - moving from one place to another and bringing their gang activity with them. My hunch is that Rochester is quite a stable city in population and that in this sense, we are more isolated from some of the things that happen elsewhere. This is changing, however."

In addition to working court cases, Taylor-Austin continues to make friends with people like Leifel Jackson, who was once the leader of the Original Gangster Crips in Little Rock, Arkansas. He is now serving time in a federal prison.

Jackson, who has been featured on the HBO special, "Bangin in Little Rock," was also featured in an Arkansas television spot in which he urges people to avoid gang life.

"Eventually you are going to end up here talking to me in person," Jackson said in the commercial. "The fast money that you would make being involved is not worth the toll that you're going to pay in the long run...It's not a month goes by that I don't get an obituary, sometimes two. I have more obituaries than books."

Taylor-Austin said Jackson is a changed man, and meeting people like him is a highlight for her. She's looking forward to working even more cases.

"Educating and helping people is what it's all about," she said.

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