La Vida Loca: The Crazy Life Essay, Research Paper

Always Running, by Luis T. Rodriguez, is a book based on a certain chapter of the author s life story. Rodriguez s life was centered in the fact that he was involved in gang life during his teen years. Like the title of his book, he was constantly running, whether it be a crime scene or the police. La Vida Loca , a Spanish phrase meaning, the crazy life, is the term used in the novel to depict the gang warfare that Rodriguez went through as he was growing up.

A crazy life is a vague and general term used to describe someone s out of the norm life. However, the teen life that Luis Rodriguez went through includes innumerable gang shootings, beatings and arrests, as well as acts of street crimes that cost the lives of his friends and family members. This crazy life, however, did not just pop out of nowhere. It progressively and steadily built from little events and influences into a full-fledged hardcore gangster life.

Luis Rodriguez s childhood life started out by the constant torture and beating that his older brother, Rano, inflicted upon him. Rano would push Luis off the roof of the house, knocking the wind out of the poor kid or smashing a metal bucket onto his head causing a gash in Luis head to spout blood. In another incident, Rano would tie a rope around his brother s head and play cowboy why yanking and groping on the rope. The abuse that Rano imposed on his younger brother also inspired the children of the barrio, or neighborhood to torment Luis.

Another major part of Luis childhood was moving. His family was constantly moving from one city to another. Because of the lack of acknowledging Luis father s achievements in Mexico, it was hard for him to find a stable job in the United States other than a mere laborer. Each time the family moved, there were new obstacles as a kid to overcome. Over the years of moving from one neighborhood to another, Luis slowly changed. When Luis finally ended up at Garvey Intermediate School, that was when he became a cholo and a budding gangster.

In the beginning, they didn t call themselves gangs. It all started out with small clubs or cliques also called clicas. They formed a small oath between the five of them. Then one day, Thee Mystics, an up coming gang in the area came to their school and wreaked havoc. Luis saw this power and wanted it. This was when La vida loca began.

First it started out with small fights here and there. Teenagers jealous of Rano s achievements in track and school would pick on Luis and start fights with him. The first time he got beaten up left him with a lopsided and obtruding chin, which was his infamous mark.

Luis became involved with the gang of his area called the Animal Tribe. He was then twelve. He witnessed gang shootings such as one that left a friend, Clavo with countless pellets in his face and an exploded eye, that later left him with one eye. He also went through many accounts of abuse from the police. In one incident the Huntington Beach Police agitated a few members of the Animal Tribe by saying racial comments directed towards them. As soon as they were angered and ready to fight, the white men revealed themselves as police and arrested the Mexican teens. They searched around for no reason and found mescaline and a couple of joints. Delighted, they arrested them for felonies and violations of the law.

Along with being the troublemakers of the town, Luis and his gang soon turned to stealing. It began with harmless stealing such as candy, toys, and food from local grocery stores or shopping centers. Then gradually, the stealing developed into something quite more heavy duty. Yuk Yuk, one of the Tribe members formed organized stealing within their group. Expensive ten-speed bikes were stolen from neighborhoods and local malls. While one of them sped off on an unlocked bike, another would trail behind in a car towards Shed s business, which offered cash on delivery for any stolen goods from television sets, stereos, cameras, and guns. Another type of stealing business that Yuk Yuk introduced the Tribe to was stealing cars. He familiarized Luis and the gang to Jandro, who would commission them to steal certain cars. He also taught them how to strip a car in a matter of minutes. They broke into homes and stole jewelry, money, and guns. For bigger items, they brought in a Volkswagen van to transport the stolen goods which included stereos, televisions, and other electronic equipment. All this stealing also expanded to armed robberies. It took some time, but Luis found himself placing guns on a man s head in order to rob them.

His gang life introduced him to drugs and alcohol. He began to experiment heavily with heroin, weed, mescaline, meth, and PCP. He took a liking to Silver Satin, tequila, and vodka. All this was at the young age of fifteen. Drugs and alcohol also led to a sexually active life for Luis. He was only at a young age of twelve when he became sexually active. That was also the age in which he attained his first tattoo from a boy at school that used sewing needles and charged five dollars an hour of work. The tattoo read La Vida Loca.

Although Luis soon came to his senses and broke free from the life of gangs later on in his life, he still lived a crazy life at such a young age. Beginning at the age of twelve, he sought for drugs, alcohol, and sex. He also witnessed shootings and death of his friends and family. Luis was a part of a stealing organization and sometimes held the handle of a gun in order to rob certain people and or stores. This would fit anyone s description of La Vida Loca, and it is certain that Luis has lived it through his teen years of participation in a gang.