

Gemora: Hi, I'm Gemora Knox, Tyler Trapp, and Martin Hollman. This is Christian flag. And today we're gonna start our interview about living in South Central LA. And first of all, we're going to start off with where and when were you born?

Christian: I was born in 1989 in South Central LA. I believe at the Cadillac Kaiser Kaiser off a Cadillac and whatever that is,

Gemora: And when and how do you or your family come to South Central?

Christian: So originally my people on my mom's side, is New Orleans, Louisiana. And then on my dad's side, combination, his mom is from what a country back country is Louisiana, like Bancroft de Ritter. And then his dad is from Georgia. My grandparents on my mom's side, my grandfather actually got into some beef with some white folks who think he put his hands on somebody. Right And this isn't what I want to say about the 40s or so. So they moved out here. My grandmother followed him because they had already met and was, you know, kind of building relationships. So they came out here. And then yeah, my grandfather, he just left Georgia, like when he was 12. And just came here, like, Yeah, I'm dealing with that. And all that. Because you know, deep south segregation is something else, you know, California in the West. You know, it was definitely here, but he died and Now I'm gonna figure it out. Then my grandmother, actually, she was the last of 16. So she was the baby girl and all her sisters had already lived down here. Or no, not all of them. A couple of them lived out here. And they sent for. And they actually set her up with my grandfather. So yeah, of course, she came out. They got together. Yes. So that was again, across the 40s and 50s. They originally came live. More whites are on the east side. Right Because back then when they came here, black people wouldn't even be allowed, like West. Central, really. So yet a lot of them stayed on that side.

Gemora: How has south-central changed over the years? Like how many years have you been living here?

Christian: So yeah, for me, I'm 1989 till now. And, I'll draw a lot from my parents' experience today. It was born in the 1950s. So I actually got older parents. But yeah, essentially, I mean, demographics shifted, right So black people eventually like over time were able to move more westward, right established communities all the way you know, going Baldwin Hills further and going toward the beaches and stuff. And then I say at a certain point, that kind of plateaued, like evened out, and now I've seen like the population starts going backward, right in terms of the black population. Start seeing different people walking little dogs down the street and stuff, you know, you're seeing the same old, the old couples, the black people on your black when they pass away, you know, people now moving in, it wasn't a war of black people, you know, a lot more black next, rather than systems in the community. But that's just yet strictly the demographics. I say coming up the gang activity community violence was real prevalent, right in the late 80s, early 90s. So I've seen that actually tail off right it's, it's definitely not to the same degree in level than it used to be. I know the you know, the streets is definitely still active and stuff going down but it's definitely shifted in terms of how out front you know, a lot of activities would

Gemora: What do you feel is South Central's greatest strength?

Christian: South Central's greatest strength

I feel like just our pride and boldness are right, like South Central everybody from South Central is super proud to be From it, and just bold about who we are right And anytime I've traveled outside of LA, even people that claim LA, they'll say, Oh, I'm from LA and they like, oh, you or I'll tell them I'm from LA and they'll tell me what part. I'm like, LA, I wish you'd been de la. Oh, I'm from Pasadena. From LA. Yay. So for me it is like really just proud and bold about who we are. Right? The rich diversity and I think connection between black and brown people, Latino people, right? Growing up in elementary school, soccer was definitely my favorite sport. Like my best friend was a Guatemalan kid, actually. Yeah, just growing up chilling at the house after school mom's feed me was it wasn't never an issue. It has those elements to it. But at the core, folks are connected. And then yes, like, LA is the center of the capital, entertainment capital, cultural capital for a whole lot is right here. Now you can find pretty much any and everything you got interested in something happening somewhere in LA, you know, whether you're into the arts, into some cultural stuff, into some technological stuff.

Gemora: What do you remember most about the LA riots?

Christian: Ooh. So I said I was only three years old when that happened. So the main story my dad tells me is we were living off 46 Between BudLong or right off of the loss of 146 feet. And yeah, he told me like he went to the store to try to get some diapers for me. And my baby sister was born in 91. And he liked the people up on the roof with, you know, long rifles and guns like, Nah, really nobody coming up through here. "He likes you, I just need stuff for my babies and like, not gonna happen". the full year that I was Wow. And just didn't hear that. And then growing up slowly hearing more about oh, the Rodney King story right and police brutality. That's like one of the earliest kinds of video footage capture of police brutality. Right. Always hearing folks like you that that was being happy. Everybody knows that's how the police will get especially LAPD infamous for that. Being further like as you get a little older than you hear the backstory or you commit the incidence of Latasha Harlan. So that was the story. The young black girl who was at a liquor store, and the convenience of the owner or the store clerk was threatening her stealing. And she blew her off and you know, Latasha blew her off and on her way walking out, oh girl shot her in the back of the head and killed her. And then she was found guilty, but didn't receive any jail time. Right. So and that happened in that same timeframe. You feel me So Natasha Harland murdered a young black girl was murdered. The Korean woman didn't get any punishment. know jail time judges like yes, she murdered her. But because of who you are, you don't need to go to jail as punishment. So that was like the heart and spirit of the black community. So then when the police got off for beating the brutality so then that's when people like, Oh, hell no. So it was like, that's why we call it the 92 uprising. Alright, so riots are just like chaos, lawlessness for no reason. Uprising is the people lashing out, bucking up against something that's gonna happen.

Gemora: And do you still have any family members nearby?

Christian: Yeah, man, for the most part, my core, family all live here. I have four brothers and sisters, although one of them lives in LA. So my eldest sister, she just moved to Vegas. But fortunately all my people are still here. My parents still live here. I still own the childhood home that I grew up in so lucky and fortunate to still have that Yeah. And then, yeah, as well, because I actually moved to Oakland for 10 years. So from 2010 to 2020. I didn't even live in LA, but I was able to come back home because all my family is right now I got a whole family. I wanted to make sure all of my little cousins and stuff my nieces and nephews are connected to my computer.

Gemora: What changes would you like to see in South Central?

Christian: Oh, no, we got enough time to mark all of the changes. But to be Frank Bro is like, the people that've been here that got generations of family have been here, I want to be able to stay here, right. And not only just stay here, but thrive here. So I didn't say this earlier. But like some of the transitions is all of the black home businesses and thriving business districts where like, even Vermont, right is thriving business, this identities to come back. Right Black people need to be positioned and given off crew opportunities need to be created for them to actually do that. Right. So we know, we are brilliant, right As a whole lot of examples of black people doing amazing things. But a lot of times the system, the environment is not set up for us to actually do it unless, you know, it's a lottery. Right One person might get through while you got 100 people trying to do something similar, but so you're estimating people being able to stay here and then thrive here, like taking ownership And actually, yeah, control of ourselves, our own communities.

Gemora: What do you know about gangs in LA?

Christian: I mean, I'll go back. So I know gangs in LA actually came out of community resistance. So again, I speak so my dad was born in the 50s, when he was growing up, like I said, they can come pass Central, if they venture this way. The police will literally beat them up, pick them up, drive them back over on the other side, white kids, white teenagers would drive in packs over into the black neighborhoods, kind of just terrorizing folks. So black people actually connected and were protecting themselves, right, they clicked up so we protected ourselves. And then out of the kind of history of the Black Panther movement, right, folks, those became more organized and focused on that element. So the Black Panthers' political self determination is economic self determination, education. So those community organizations, the Black Panthers in the US organization, that kind of was at the origins of win over time. Right. COINTELPRO so there was literally a government effort to destroy, undermine, and attack those groups. Well, over time, the leadership gets removed, eliminated, right They literally like to put in propaganda to turn the groups against each other. And then the overall mission of what those organizations were intended to do, gets confused. So now you have these groups, factions of men of males, that is the warrior class, right You got the 15 and 35 year olds, who don't have any direction. So then they turn to each other. Right And essentially, you got groups and sets of people who don't, they don't, they don't have the right aim and direction, and organize direction. So yeah, and then growing up in a neighborhood, you know, everybody grew up together until,

like I said, you hit that warrior class age about 12. And everybody starts branching off and they own little directions based on either your family ties, or where you live. Yeah, you just get put into whatever the shit is, like, are we beefing with them? Oh, yeah. Why? Because we didn't like to kill such and such back then. Okay, but what happened? What do you do now? Like, also no backstory? You know, we don't just beef it just because that's the way it is. Right? So yeah. Like I say, I do recognize, though, that there's a slight shift in culture in the way the gang activities and the gang culture is in LA. So yeah.

Gemora: What have people been doing to make these changes here in our community?

Christian: So it's, it's a lot of stuff, man. Um, so specifically like with the gang stuff is a whole new way like gang intervention, community intervention. So recognizing that you got a generation of cats that grew up in a gang activity that early on, got in prison, did 10 to 15, 25 year bids, but then come home and like, see the contradictions, right So now they want to kind of use the fact that Yo, I got, I got credibility, I got street cred, I'm a reputable I'm OG or something. But now I see, um, let me help the vision. Let me reorient the vision, or at the very least, let me just help be one of the frontline people that intervene in the conflict. So like I said, the beef just straight up, red and blue are those who were in the Crips. Now let's get to the heart of whatever the conflict is, and figure out what it is without necessarily using violence. So right you got, there's a lot of organizations that's doing that work. You got organizations like community coalition, and do organizing with the people to say, we got problems, what's the problems and what y'all want to see to fix it? Let's not just leave it up to the mayor, or the city council. Right now we want to push and yeah, the right people should get voted in. But once they're in there, we gotta keep telling them what to do. Okay, telling them what we want. Right So yeah, organizations like this, that's pushing for that change. And then not mention all of the community, nonprofits that do the services, they provide the youth development programs, they do the sports programs, right. So all of that kind of goes into supporting that change.

Gemora: Why should Younger people know about South Central History?

Christian: I mean, like they say, if you don't know where you've been, it's hard to say where you're gonna go. If you don't know where you are, they say, a tree without roots is dead. So if you don't know your roots, do history, you just like living zombies out here, then you can basically download anything into your mind. And then that's another problem. Like a lot of times, we don't really know our history. So what we even care about, where are we trying to go? is based on, like, all of the BS that we see on a day to day basis. And we know that it is a capitalist country, so they try to make money. So everything that even they might convince you that it makes sense and matters, though, is because they try to sell so, right You don't know your history. You can't like differentiating what's important, what's not, what's what's nonsense, what's not what's gonna help me move where I need to be, versus where they try to take.

Gemora: Thank you so much for your time. We appreciate it.