Gangsters and Preachers - The Culture of Sexism Inside the MS13

#MS13Sexism
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In the suffocating heat of summer in El Salvador, José Elvis Herrera Reinoso, alias “Elvis,” is gathered with the family of an elderly woman inside her small home. The woman, who suffers from diabetes, had been close to death just a few days beforehand, but made a seemingly inexplicable recovery.

With just a few simple tools, including a Bible and loudspeaker, Elvis guides the family members in a religious celebration of this “miracle.” His well-practiced preaching and passionate reading from the holy book tell anyone listening that he is a dedicated pastor. And the tattoos that cover his face let them know he was a member of the **Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS13)**, one of the most feared gangs in the world.
An Ambitious Child

Elvis longed for power, even as a child.

He was twelve years old, living in Suchitoto, a city in the Cuscatlán department with cells of National Resistance Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas de la Resistencia Nacional - FARN) — a guerrilla group that emerged in El Salvador in the 1970s — when he first expressed interest in taking up arms.

FARN was part of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (Frente Farabundo Martí para Liberación Nacional - FMLN), an umbrella group for left-wing insurgents in El Salvador that took on the country’s military government in a civil war that lasted from 1979 to 1992.

His brothers had joined the guerrillas young, and Elvis longed to follow in their footsteps. He was fascinated by the authority exercised by his older brother, who was in charge of some guerrilla camps. That power was attractive.

“I wanted to join the guerrillas to have respect, a leadership role,” he told InSight Crime, many years later, as he looked back on his early life.

His brothers prevented him from becoming a guerrilla fighter and he had to settle for being an “ear,” providing the guerrillas with information about what was happening in the city or bringing food to the insurgent camps.

In 1992, the war ended, but Elvis’ desire to be a leader did not. The poverty and desolation that gripped the country in the aftermath of the conflict allowed certain activities to flourish. On one hand there was religion, in the form of the Pentecostal Church. On the other, was crime and criminal organizations. Elvis chose his new path.

“I made the decision to get the respect that I had wanted in the guerrilla group through the gang. That’s what got me involved.”

Still a child, he joined an infamous gang called La Suchi, and eventually assumed a leadership role. He was loyal to the gang, and attacked gang members in other districts.

Respect was earned by completing orders and committing violence. The so-called “irons” — knives, machetes and firearms — were used often. The
national government, still getting to its feet, was not concerned about these local gangs. Then the Mara Salvatrucha, also known as the MS13, showed up.

Elvis first saw MS13 members at the beginning of the 1990s, in nightclubs in San Salvador, the country’s capital, where gang founders like “Cachi,” “Little Man” and “Ozzy” controlled areas and sold drugs.

Gang members began to appear throughout El Salvador just as the war ended, following their expatriation from the United States. The newcomers acted confidently and expressed themselves with authority, were idolized by men and successful with women. According to Elvis, the aspiration of many young women at the time was to become romantically involved with one of the new gangsters.

Elvis marveled at the style of the newly-arrived criminals, including their trademark Dickies-brand trousers and Nike Cortez sneakers. But what caught his attention most was the respect they received.

### Joining the Gang

As soon as Elvis became a teenager, he joined the MS13.

In those days, gang aspirants did not have to undergo the life and death tests that Elvis would demand under his leadership. Instead, he had to endure blows from his future comrades for thirteen seconds, as the leader counted slowly.

“I made the decision to get the respect that I had wanted in the guerrilla group through the gang. That’s what got me involved,” he said of his entrance into the Mara.

For Elvis, respect and leadership are critical to standing out in any area of life, and they are obtained by showing commitment and the ability to deliver. During his time in the gang, he said he demonstrated his reliability through extortion, murder and any other action that was required of him.

His devotion to the gang was so great that he tattooed his face with the gang’s insignia. He complied with the gang’s rules and culture, which, among other things, demanded the control of women as a sign of domination and power.

Women were nothing more than objects in the gang. They were shared like toys, and gang members were given free rein to use them how they liked, sexually and otherwise.
He treated the homegirls — the term for women in the gang — differently, and barely allowed their participation. For him, women were “a lot of problems” and he saw them as a risk. They were the weaker sex, he thought, and they could easily become informers.

With these beliefs, he earned respect and leadership, eventually controlling several cliques and being recognized throughout El Salvador. After establishing himself as the ranflero, or leader, of his clique, he continued to gain more power, until he became a “corredor de programa,” — a regional leader, not only of his clique, but of a cluster of cliques.

This chauvinism became part of his daily life. Through the gang, he achieved what he had longed for: leadership.

**Face of Fear, Heart of Love**

Elvis is a complex character. His tattooed face immediately recalls his violent and criminal past. However, when he speaks about God, his history falls away. His huge smile gives him an almost affable look.
It’s been more than 15 years since he chose Christ over the ‘Beast,’ as the MS13 gang is also known.

For a time, Elvis was part of the Evangelical Ministry of the Darkness into the Marvelous Light, a congregation of former gang members from different churches that go out to preach on the streets hoping to turn gang members away from sin. They preach passionately, shouting warnings and biblical quotes. Some onlookers listen, others ignore them. On the street, they are known as “the hallelujahs”.

Then Elvis founded his own church, Christ Calls You Ministry, which he began building next to his house nine years ago, funded by donations. When telling his story today, Elvis says that he built the church with his own hands. He is not speaking figuratively. He constructed the walls, doors, floor, decoration and everything else in the 80-square-meter space. The decorations are modest — there are no crucifixes or images, only a seat and a hand-painted landscape on the main wall. He dreams of growing the church: God’s work is now his life.

It was a long journey to get here. It took more than a decade of being immersed in gang life for Elvis to recognize, in 2004, that he wanted out. He no longer found meaning in gang life.

Elvis was certain that he did not want to die as an MS13 member, but getting out alive was no easy task. Leaving the gang meant leaving his homeboys, the women, the violence and the drugs. He would need to find a new income and be able to feed his family.

He couldn’t voice his vulnerabilities, least of all to his homeboys. Showing emotions was seen as a negative, female trait, he explained, and any weakness was preyed upon. The MS13 called their enemies chavalas, meaning girls or women, to symbolize their inferiority. When you enter the gang, “you become more macho,” Elvis said.

Every time Elvis cried, he did so alone.

“It was an embarrassment for a gang leader to cry in front of active homeboys. But I cried many times. I cried secretly in the silence of the night. I wanted to transform my life,” he explained.

Elvis wanted to know what life could be like for him if he left the gang, but he had no reference for living outside of organized crime. He didn’t know how to do anything other than be a gang member, and that terrified him.

That changed one afternoon in 2004. He was at home, looking out the window, heartbroken, when he began to pray.

“God came to me,” he said, of that defining moment.
The next day, he began attending a church in the capital and “became a servant of Christ.” Elvis found common ground between his new path and his old criminal life. The subordination and total surrender required by the Church was similar to that demanded by the MS13, and he’d always found it easy to follow his group’s strict rules. But the hardest part of leaving the gang was abandoning his role as a leader.

“That was what I never wanted to lose,” he recalled.

New Family, Same Hierarchy

In 2004, after becoming a Christian, Elvis served nine months at Quezaltepeque prison in the municipality of La Libertad on outstanding criminal charges. Behind bars, he assumed a pastoral role, leading and caring for his fellow inmates.

“When I was with the gang, and since I have been with the Lord, I’ve always sought leadership roles.”

After being released, he applied what he’d learned in prison to his new life. He continued preaching and supporting others. He fasted daily for a month at a time. His dedication gained him the respect of his peers.

“When I was with the gang, and since I have been with the Lord, I’ve always sought leadership roles,” he explained.

Through the Church, Elvis discovered that he could be a ranflero once again. The Church believes that the radical conversion and testimony of former gang members who have heard God’s call is enough for them to qualify as pastors. No theological training is needed. This favors former gang leaders, whose experience as figureheads in MS13 now helps them save souls from the pulpit.

And becoming a Christian was the only way for Elvis to get out of the gang. Indeed, finding God is the only route by which the MS13 allow a homie to leave alive. Surrendering to God is a personal decision, and one that is respected.

But Elvis had to be certain about his decision to abandon the gang. As several former MS13 members told InSight Crime, “you cannot play with God, nor
with the gang.” The reality is that even if a homie leaves the gang, he never really stops being a gang member. Most continue to live in the gang area and to interact with gang members. They know never to betray the group. If rules are broken, former members can still face violent consequences.

They also face the rampaging wrath of the law. For the government of President Nayib Bukele’s, any homie who was once a gang member, and who still has the tattoos to prove it, is a criminal. Indeed, the government recently declared a “war on gangs”, initiating a state of exception which enables it to arrest any citizen and commit abuses of power. Those former gang members like Elvis, who try to reintegrate into society after leaving their lives of crime behind, are caught up in the government’s marauding.

Elvis now preaches to a regular congregation of 15. He is as fervent a pastor as he was a gang leader. He feels “transgressions” against Christian morality just as keenly as he did when homies went against the rules of the Mara. One of those most serious transgressions is homosexuality.

“Where in the Bible does it say that a homosexual can be forgiven by the Lord?” Elvis asked, rhetorically. “Nowhere,” he answered.
His view is shared by others. Douglas Dagoberto Coreto Garay, another former gang member and fellow member of the Evangelical Ministry of the Darkness into the Marvelous Light, told InSight Crime that though many members can find Bible verses that help redeem them from crimes including murder and rape, gay men cannot be saved.

“A male lying down with another male is an abomination against God,” he said.

The two explain that while former gang members like Elvis can be forgiven by the Church and can in time become pastors, gay men do not have this chance, even if they “repent.”

“The Bible says that it is unforgivable,” said Coreto Garay.

Steadfast Roles

To earn a living, Elvis has continued to sell clothing smuggled in from the United States from his home. When he isn’t working, he travels to MS13 neighborhoods to profess his faith hoping to convince gang members to find a new path. He still enjoys respect among active gang members.

He lives in a small house made out of sheet metal with a dirt floor, which he shares with his wife, daughter and another former gang member.

The relationship between Elvis and his wife is traditional. He believes that the role of women is to take serve their husbands unconditionally. “The Church says so,” he explained.

One of the first rituals that Christian conversion requires in order to climb the religious ladder is marriage. If a man is married, he can rise to a more responsible position such as pastor. The selection of a man’s partner are in the hands of other men, who look for a woman who will “take good care of him.”

In the gang, women are similarly subjugated with threats and violence, both physical and sexual. In the Church, they are a form of chattel, Elvis argued.

“Married women have to be attentive to the Lord, but also their husband. She is no longer free. She is bound by her marriage and she has to submit to her husband,” Elvis said. “She has to wash his clothes, and she has to serve him food. She is a housewife, so she has to keep her house organized and tidy.”

He backs his views by citing Bible passages, and says that men, for their part, must take on the responsibility that comes with leadership. They must provide for their wife and their family, as Elvis has always tried to do.
But he considers women to be a temptation for men, who, he argues, cannot control their carnal impulses. Women should not adorn their bodies with jewelry nor use make-up, in case they awaken male desire. In the gang he suspected that women’s weaknesses meant they could be informers. Now, he uses the story of Adam and Eve to justify his belief that women are corrupters of men.

“Sisters can steal the blessing from any brother,” said Elvis. “Her blouse has to be normal, not low-cut showing her breasts. If a woman goes around with a blouse down to here[...]you may be a Christian, but your eyes are still going to notice.”

Elvis takes a seat at his kitchen table while his wife serves his evening meal. He doesn’t need to move; she attends to everything.

Afterwards, sitting on the sidewalk outside of his home, a neighbor passes by. Elvis invites her to a service, and she tells him that she would like to go, but that she’ll have to ask her husband’s permission. Elvis isn’t surprised. To him, it’s better that way.

“She can’t make the decision for herself. If the husband tells her that she can’t go, she doesn’t go. She has to subject herself to him,” he said.
God’s Forgiveness Never Arrived

It was around 8 p.m. on March 31. Elvis had just finished a religious service and was sitting down for dinner with his family. It was the fourth day of the government's crackdown on the gangs, official in response to a wave of homicides that had rocked El Salvador earlier in March. Groups of police and soldiers patrolled the streets, ceaselessly looking for gang members and men with tattoos.

The mood was tense, especially in poorer neighborhoods with the MS13 has its strongest ties. The municipality of San Juan Opico, where Elvis was living, was no exception. As he finished dinner, a policeman entered his house and took him away by force. They put him in the patrol car and took him to the local police station where they stripped him to the waist, photographed him and posted the photographs on social media.

Elvis has been in prison for more than two months, starving and attempting to manage his diabetes. He has no lawyer to defend him against charges of belonging to a terrorist organization. Despite this adversity, his wife maintains her iron-clad faith.

“God will set him free because he no longer does wrong,” she said.

Meanwhile, the regime continues its Super Mano Dura (Super Iron Fist) policy and the prisons are on the verge of collapse. More than 40,000 people have been captured, among them former homeboys like Elvis, who left the gang to dedicate themselves to God and the Church. God may have forgiven, but the law does not.
Flaca considers herself to be a tough woman, capable of bearing anything: hard labor, marginalization, domestic violence, hunger and heartbreak. Even the floggings of the Mara Salvatrucha in El Salvador.

When she joined the gang, she was whipped for thirteen seconds and withstood the pain, despite just being a teenager.

She chose to be beaten up. Better than than the trencito (little train), a form of gang initiation exclusively for women in which they are penetrated by a succession of homeboys one after the other.

Rather, Flaca demonstrated the tough and unwavering character that the gang’s image demanded. She didn’t want to give “gifts of love,” as she calls them. That would have meant starting off on the wrong foot.

So, she made an effort to blend in: to walk, dress and talk like the guys from her neighborhood, without having an appearance that was too masculine. The homeboys do not like a woman to look machorra (butch).
The homegirls “should fulfill the same role as a man but she shouldn’t look too manly,” said Frog, an old gang member.

Finding that balance is difficult.

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The first is the same reason given by most of the men when asked that question: “El vacil,” a slang term meaning the time gang members spend together, smoking marijuana, listening to music and even fighting.

Flaca decided to join the gang at the age of 13, for two reasons.

The second reason was revenge. Flaca was tired of seeing her stepfather hit her mother, leaving her to take care of her two brothers. This sense of anger led her to seek a space in which she could get her own back, not necessarily against her stepfather, but against the whole world. She found that refuge in the MS13.


After her initiation, Flaca received her taka, or nickname, which we will not reveal for her safety.
She was made aware of the MS13’s basic street rules: members must represent the gang at all times, control territory and kill chavalas (a slang term for girls which the MS13 uses to refer to its enemies).

Another rule was crystal clear: see, hear and keep quiet about gang affairs. Over the years, Flaca has seen and heard a lot but that rule remained with her. Even now, when talking about aspects of her past, she goes pale.

All the leaders, known as ranfleros, were men. Despite that, upon entering her new family, she heard the hackneyed rhetoric promising that homegirls would be treated the same as men. If someone crossed a line with her, she would be defended. And if she was told to pull a trigger, she would have to do so at the same time as any man. Flaca was more than prepared to do so.

But the truth is that women have never been treated equally in the MS13, when she first joined the gang, she said the protection given to her by her male peers felt fetishistic, due to the fact that she was a virgin. Many men wanted to take her virginity and tried to control her.

“They didn’t let me have a boyfriend or anything. That’s how they were, they didn’t allow me to go out with anyone because I was a virgin. I grew up with the gang teachings, which stated that I had to know my place. Otherwise, they would use force to teach me respect,” said Flaca while sipping a coffee, years later.

She described how one high-ranking leader in the MS13 developed an obsession with smelling her hair. The day he learned that Flaca had lost her virginity, he stopped talking to her.

An added difficulty is that leadership and hierarchy in the gang were attained through violence and respect. But earning respect in the MS13 was particularly tricky for women.

They had to withstand constant harassment while remaining stoic but, paradoxically, said harassment couldn’t be allowed to continue unchecked for long. According to Flaca, some homeboys would get angry if the female gang members did not stop their advances. If they did not protest, then it was a sign the women “liked” it and they were blamed for it.

Despite these heavy constraints, Flaca loved life in the gang. She became violent and emotionless. She learned to defend herself. Killing was not a problem for her, especially rapists. She described how she dealt with one man who had allegedly abused a young girl.

“I put him on a platform. I grabbed him and I tied him up. I told the guys to bring me a broomstick. ‘Feel what the girl felt,’ I told him. I put him in a squatting position and moved the girl away. I put the broomstick in his butt and taught him a lesson. Then I put his dick in his mouth,” she told InSight Crime, with a hint of pride. She confirmed she killed the attacker.
But Flaca soon realized that the demands within the gang were becoming increasingly complicated for women. They were forbidden from having romantic relationships outside the group. The homeboys only allowed the homergirls to have relationships with other gang members. According to Flaca, this was out of fear that a relationship with a paisa (civilian) could divert their attention and lead to them giving up, or even betraying, the gang.

Flaca recalled that one girl who was discovered to have a secret relationship with a paisa was severely beaten as punishment.

This type of control leaves its mark. Flaca has continued to have a hard time dating anyone who is not a gang member. It simply becomes natural to fall in love with a homeboy.

“We have to stay in the neighborhood as we are women,” another female gang member told InSight Crime, as if to justify herself. And none dare to denounce the abuse and violence they receive.

It became impossible for these women to enjoy their sexuality without facing stigmatization or condemnation. A history of dating different men is criticized. But not being engaged is also grounds for abuse.

“They don’t like easy women. They told me they were going to cut my lady parts like a fish, if I did something with someone [they didn’t approve of],” Flaca explained.

And then she became pregnant. But she didn’t want to be a mother - that would be leaving the life she’d built behind. Despite the control, the violence and the abuse, she loved the gang and she did not want to lose it.

### How to Deal with Pregnancy

Abortion was the first option she thought of. Both she and the homeboys believed that having a baby would cut her off from gang life. That was the last thing she wanted. Her life revolved around the two letters, M and S. She saw her battles as being fought on the street, not inside the home.

During a medical visit, she asked the doctor to abort the child but he refused.

In El Salvador, abortion is illegal and getting a clandestine abortion is fraught with risk. Terminating a pregnancy has led to mothers being charged with “aggravated homicide,” with a sentence of up to 30 years in prison.
El Salvador is one of the few countries in the world to have imprisoned women for terminating a pregnancy when the mother was at risk and in cases of rape. One woman, Evelyn Hernández was jailed in 2016 after her baby was stillborn. She was cleared of these charges in 2019.

With nowhere to turn, Flaca went so far as to ask a homie to beat her in order to kill the child. But nobody did. The MS13 does not agree with abortion.

When her son was born, Flaca didn’t want to look at him.

“Take it away,” she snapped at the nurse. “I don’t want to see it.”

But she said that, as soon as their eyes met, “I went soft.” Her gang-built outer shell had cracked.

At the time, the MS13 was going through a difficult time. The Salvadoran government was implementing repressive policies against the gangs that were reflected in their names: mano dura (Iron Fist) and súper mano dura (super Iron Fist). Homeboys and homegirls were imprisoned like never before, sometimes for just having a tattoo or gathering on a street corner.

Flaca avoided prison while raising her son and honoring her duties to the MS13.

But things soon got even more complicated for the homegirls. When the Mara Salvatrucha began to grow rapidly in El Salvador, leadership was left in the hands of the locals, instead of the original leaders from the United States. For Flaca, this marked the time when the gang became even more sexist and gender-exclusive. First, women were banned from participating in certain meetings then forbidden from entering certain cliques. According to several gang members we spoke to, the MS13 began dramatically lessening the roles women could play sometime around 2005.

Still, Flaca remained in the gang for at least another decade.

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In 2006, Flaca had her second child. As with her first pregnancy, the father was an MS13 member.

This second child was born on December 13. She was happy at this and felt a special affection for it. Thirteen is an important number for the Mara Salvatrucha, representing the letter ‘M.’ This contrasted with her firstborn whose birthday was on October 18. Flaca had tried hard for him to be born a day earlier.

The number eighteen is associated with the MS13’s greatest rival, Barrio 18, or the 18th Street Gang. As a consequence, she has never celebrated her child’s birthday on the day itself.
As for relationships, Flaca said she has experienced some love within the gang but fleetingly. The father of one of her children beat her, often making her bleed or knocking her out. Domestic violence has been a constant.

And while sexual abuse and rape is prohibited by the rules of the MS13, she said few obey. Flaca told InSight Crime of how she once tried to defend herself from a beating only to be knocked out. She awoke tied to a pole. Several gang members wanted to kill her but the man who had beaten her stopped them. “Let’s have fun with her,” he said, before beginning to rape her.

“Everyone watched as he raped me. These are things that nobody wants to talk about and that nobody cares about,” she recalled.

In 2008, she was sentenced to prison. It opened her eyes. Relations with the other inmates were positive, as homegirls mixed with regular women. Under Salvadoran law, children under five whose mothers are in prison can live with them, and so gang members even cared for each other’s children.

“They were all aunts, even if they are not from the same neighborhood,” she said.
She also discovered a talent for tattoos and became a sought-after artist, often inking other prisoners.

There were darker sides. Some homegirls sent videos of themselves, naked and masturbating, to gang members in the United States in exchange for money. She also witnessed gang members in lesbian relationships, going against the MS13’s violent stance against any form of homosexuality. Flaca admitted she denounced these girls to the gang and beat up anyone who dared harass her.

“I don’t like them, it makes me angry,” she said about these women.

But by the time she left prison in 2015, her love for the gang was rapidly beginning to fade.

Flaca was a changed woman. She no longer identified with the hardened homegirl she had once been. She no longer had the same appetite for violence. And so, she soon turned to the only place she could.

**God Over Gang**

Flaca had always denied the existence of God. She said this changed one day when a homeboy she was close to went missing. In despair, she prayed to Jesus, telling him that “if you really exist, bring him back to me.” To her surprise, the homie soon made a return.

But she still remained distant from religion for a time. “I didn’t give God my heart,” she said. Nevertheless, this was her first experience with God and it opened the door to her faith.

It was not easy for Flaca to be accepted into the Christian community. The first few times she attended church people shunned her. When I went to a church to visit, I sat on the church bench and everyone got up from it,” she explained to InSight Crime.

For this very reason, she ended up joining a church made up of converted gang members “because not all churches see us in a positive light.”

She came to the painful conclusion that her life had been a waste. She regretted most of her past, the things she had done and her transformation by a handful of homeboys who told her she would be part of the MS13 forever.

“I was just there to serve them,” she concluded reluctantly.

In 2018, three years after leaving prison, Flaca left the gang to find shelter in the Church. MS13 members called her to find out if she had really “left the gang for God.”
“Some encouraged me, wished me the best and said it was for the best. Others told me I was a coward,” she explained many years later, in 2021, when InSight Crime spoke to her. By that point, she was steadfast in her faith and had decided to serve God.

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As in the MS13, evangelical churches with congregations consisting of former gang members are led by men.

The life of a converted gang member is to “read the Bible and keep quiet,” said Flaca.

Flaca immediately understood that going from gang to the Church would not improve her condition. In her congregation, for example, she is the only woman.

The pastor is the spiritual leader, similar to the ranflero who led her gang clique. The only difference is that the pastor leads the congregation down the right path. She goes to church every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. But if she does not, they ask her where she was, make her feel guilty and tell her she is not committed to her faith.

This discipline is omnipresent and the rules are many. She has stopped smoking, drinking and having sex. She explained that she fears failing God. She has begun speaking more formally. She can only wear long skirts, she cannot show too much skin, or wear too much makeup or jewelry. From once seeking an abortion, she has now become a vehement pro-life defender.

There have been aspects of evangelical life that troubled her. Flaca told InSight Crime she does not understand why open displays of affection are frowned upon or why she needs to go out and preach the Word of God to people with a megaphone. She doesn't see anything wrong with wearing makeup.

But while Flaca has felt the Church can be too conservative, she still finds comfort in the Bible. Her pastor has been satisfied with her shift from being a gang member to a god-fearing Christian. Religion has soothed her anger. But control of her body has ostensibly passed from one institution to another.
And she had not wholly escaped the scrutiny of the MS13. Converting to the Church is allowed but a member who does so gives up any criminal income and remains under the control of the gang.

“They watch you and examine you, ensuring that you do not make a misstep that would give them reason to kill you,” said Flaca, adding that the life of a converted gang member is to “read the Bible and keep quiet.”

Besides the Church, she has spent her days devoted to her children. As a single mother, her life has been hard. Finding a job has been difficult as much of her life was spent in the gang. She has worked as a delivery person, a porter and a maid to support her family.

Her life has a well-planned routine, she goes between work and home or between church and home. Nothing else. Flaca said she has abandoned all connections to anyone in the MS13. Details of her life have reached the gang but she said this was because her neighborhood is dominated by the MS13.
The fear has never gone away: the fear that she might die, or that the gang will take her children, or kill them.

![Photo: Facebook](image-url)

A handful of homeboys once told her they would be there for her forever. They weren’t. Now, Flaca has only the Church.
InSight Crime is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the study of the principal threat to national and citizen security in Latin America and the Caribbean: organized crime. For a decade, InSight Crime has crossed borders and institutions – as an amalgam of journalism outlet, think tank and academic resource – to deepen the debate and inform on organized crime in the Americas. On-the-ground reporting, careful research and impactful investigations are hallmarks of the organization from the very beginning.

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