

Down and Dirty Looks

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My wife and I went to our favorite burrito place the other night. Once outside we noticed some "homies" who were not from the neighborhood. I slipped into my urban soldier mode and started "mean mugging" them. This caused them to walk off because I showed them a certain respect, without any fear. Social and political predators can read body language and attack those unprepared.

Mugging is a Hip Hop term for giving someone mean and/or threatening looks. Another term is "mad dogging" someone. The look usually takes the form of a scowl or an exaggerated facial expression. The eyes are fixed and glaring, making it clear that you are unapproachable and that it would be a mistake to mess with you.

Robbers, junkies and car jackers are good at reading body language. They can tell who they can and cannot punk. A good rule of thumb is to try to look crazier than the person who wants to jack or intimidate you.

With the unmitigated carnage of war drama simmering in the back of our thoughts, and the horror of increased urban violence threatening our home towns, there seems to be a pall of anger and fear in the air. People are quick tempered. I am no exception.

My brother used to say, "Don't look at me in that tone of voice." I realize that people from every walk of life have their own style of mean mugging people. The most traditional is the elementary school teacher who constricts her lips into a colorless circle while frowning. This is usually after little Johnny eats a bowlful of paste or glues someone's head to a desk.

Pathetic psychopathic (traitorous to La Raza) gang bangers adapt this stoic, shark-like, straight ahead stare while the head is tilted slightly upward. This tactic is used when they are being insulted and/or being read their Miranda rights. The goal of this posture is to show no reaction or weakness. The controlled lack of emotion can successfully intimidate (or catch off guard) the one who may be seconds away from being dropped.

Many people use the scowl, which is an amended frown, mostly with the lips. This is usually accompanied by the Clint Eastwood squint of the eyes, and might even include a slow, disgusted shaking of the head. In order for this to work, the squint has to be directed, unflinchingly and laser-like, squarely on the subject in question.

Police are trained in this tactic. They are taught not to look directly into the subjects eyes but right above the eyebrows. This give the person being stared down the indication that the intimidator has no fear of the individual. The truth is that the intimidator in this particular case has no fear of the person's eyebrows.

Some folks are more animated and theatrical in their mean mugging. They take the procedure into the realm of performance art. Skilled users employ the "opening the eyes as large as they can while tilting the head to the side" technique. Multi-taskers can mumble gibberish while flailing their arms out to the side. Masters of this technique (males and females usually found in correctional facilities) have the ability to keep one eye open and bulging while keeping the other one in an Eastwood squint. You need to run away from people who can do that.

The mean face mugging is probably a primal thing. It showed predatory animals that any other animal with a face like that probably wouldn't taste good. The ability to look inedible, coupled with the ability to out run pleasant looking folks, have kept us in the game in the 21st century.

Because of my urban upbringing I find myself para-mugging most of the time. I was taught that for man to smile or laugh too much shows weakness and a lack of macho character. Someone who appears silly cannot be taken seriously and/or given an appropriate amount of respect.

The safest thing to do in a potentially confrontational situation is to briefly look the intimidator squarely in the eyes (or use the police eyebrow technique) showing no fear, yet a certain acknowledgement. Then go about your business with confidence.

We are living in a time that calls for an uncommon unity of spirit, albeit, there are many varied and valid opinions regarding the recession, war and public policy. These are American family issues that we should discuss and not divide over.

It is really easy to pick a fight when you are

broke busted and disgusted. The good news is that the Bible says the meek shall inherit the earth. The term meek means self controlled. Govern your life accordingly.