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Boy Shot to Death While Walking Near Valley School

by DAVID PIERSON and ERIN PARK, TIMES STAFF WRITERS

A 16-year-old Kennedy High School student, who was walking after school to meet his mother, was shot to death Thursday about 20 feet from the Granada Hills campus, authorities said.

A red vehicle pulled up beside Ricky Arriequin and a few friends at 2:55 p.m. near Woodley Avenue and San Fernando Mission Road, police said.

A male passenger jumped out and asked Arriequin and his friends what gang they were from and then opened fire, said Los Angeles Police Department Det. Mike Oppelt. Arriequin, a Pacoima resident, died at the scene.

His family and friends said Arriequin was not a gang member, that he was at the wrong place at wrong time.

Kennedy Principal Jim Gwin said that school ends at 2:49 p.m. and that most of the 2,800 students were leaving the campus when the shooting occurred. He said that in two years as principal, he had never dealt with a killing on campus.

"I'm concerned for all the students," he said, standing at the crime scene. "It's an awful thing. One of our basic jobs is making the school safe."

Thursday's shooting was at least the fifth near a San Fernando Valley high school in two years.

"He was a little guy, very skinny; he was not a gang member," said Brian Flores, a friend of Arriequin.

Flores, 19, said that there was a great deal of tension between students at Kennedy High School and gangs out of Pacoima, and that they often face off at a nearby mall.

"At least once a week, there's fights and stabbings," he said.

More than 50 bystanders, including friends and family, stood down the street on Woodley Avenue alongside the Granada Hills Plaza, a busy strip mall located about 200 feet from the school's front gates.

Mary Torres, 16, Arriequin's girlfriend, sat on a curb in a parking lot next to the school and cried.

"He was so sweet," she said. "He always listened to his parents. He loved his mom. He always told me he loved his mom."

At Arriequin's grandparents' Granada Hills house, family and friends gathered at dusk.

Stephanie Escobar, 31, Ricky's aunt, said, "He was a great kid. He never went anywhere. That's why I just can't understand this. I just can't believe anyone would want to hurt him."

Other Valley high schools, however, have also recently endured gang violence. Earlier this year outside Cleveland High, a gang brawl erupted into gunfire, leaving two 11th-graders injured on the street in front of the school.

In November, a gunman shot and wounded a 17-year-old Taft High School student on campus shortly after a football game.

A month earlier, a 15-year-old San Fernando High School student was shot in the hand during a confrontation between two groups of youths near campus.

This article was published on the *L.A. Times* homepage (www.latimes.com) on September 14th, 2001.

TASKS:

- 1) Summarize the text.
- 2) Impulse writing; "Violence at schools". What are the reasons, who are the victims, what should be done against it?
- 3) Write a similar newspaper report or a TV report (dialogue).