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## Serial Killer In Contention For Peace Prize

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IN 1981, a jury sentenced Crips gang founder Stanley "Tookie" Williams to death after he was convicted of killing four people. Williams shot an unarmed 7-Eleven teenage store clerk named Alvin Owens in the head twice during a 1979 robbery that netted \$120. A month later, Williams, accompanied by a shotgun and a friend, robbed a motel. Robert Yang testified that after he heard shots, he found his father, mother and sister fatally wounded.

Hey, that's old news. Tookie's a new man. This month, Swiss legislator Mario Fehr nominated Williams for the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize. Call Tookie the Nobel Peace Prize killer.

Fehr explained Monday: "He might not even have killed those four people. I don't know what he did 20 years ago." And if Tookie did kill four innocent people? "This is something that you can show to young people . . . that no matter what mistakes you have made in your life, you can change for the better," Fehr answered. What a swell message for kids: You can gun down four people and still turn your life around.

Or at least find some suckers who will believe you've changed.

What makes Tookie groupies think the Crips founder is a man of peace? Williams says that he regrets founding the Crips and has written a series of children's books to warn kids against gangs and violence. When he was a child, he has explained, prison seemed like a glamorous place. A friend's ex-con big brother called them "gladiator schools." Au contraire, Williams now warns kids,

"Rather than being a place where men can prove their toughness, prison is where men sometimes go stir-crazy, or are even killed."

To the extent that Williams' books turn kids away from gangs and violence, Williams deserves credit for doing what he should be doing -- atoning.

Alas, it is hard to believe in The Tookie's conversion. For one thing, Williams shows no remorse for these vicious and senseless murders. His Web site -- [www.tookie.com](http://www.tookie.com) -- features an apology, but not for the murders. Instead, he apologizes to "the children of America and South Africa" for starting the Crips. And: "I didn't expect the Crips to end up ruining the lives of so many young people, especially young black men who have hurt other young black men."

San Quentin officials believe Williams is still a gang leader. Spokesman Vernell Crittendon explained, "We have received information as recent as June 2000 from other inmates in other prisons that he is the leader of the Blue-note Crips."

In 1989, Williams also denied that he was involved in gang activities. Yet prison officials determined that another inmate stabbed Williams because of what Crittendon termed "a conflict of power as to

who would be head of the Crips."

As for Williams' assertion that he has walked away from gang life, Crittendon noted, "Find me a gang leader who says he's the gang leader." Doesn't happen.

For Tookie's part, it probably is difficult to show remorse for murders he initially denied committing. At first, he used an alibi defense. A girlfriend said she spent the night of the 7-Eleven robbery with Tookie; a stepfather said he saw Tookie at a bar parking lot before the motel robbery.

A jury didn't buy it. Witnesses and physical evidence tied Williams to the crimes. Williams nonetheless has convinced some people -- like his co-author Barbara Becnel -- that he didn't kill the four victims. But since the courts don't buy that line, his attorneys are arguing that Williams should not be executed because he suffers from organic brain damage and was not mentally competent -- either when he killed the four victims, or at the time of his trial.

Interesting. Williams writes children's books. He boasted to the Los Angeles Times in 1993 that he studied economics, politics, black history, English, philosophy and psychology. Yet his legal defense argues -- and some of the experts who have examined him agree -- that Williams is brain damaged.

Clearly this guy is good at appearing erudite to some, brain damaged to others; contrite to do-gooders on the outside, in charge to the folks inside.

Not everyone falls under the spell. Over the years, a neuropsychiatrist concluded that Williams was unable to conform his conduct to the law. Two psychiatrists determined that the methodical nature of the crimes proved that Williams was capable of premeditating the killings -- which belies the mental impairment defense. May the Nobel folks be as clear-sighted.

"I feel it was an insult to the victims and an affront to the award itself, " Deputy Attorney General Lisa J. Brault said. No lie.

This is where the anti-death penalty crowd always chokes. It's not enough to say capital punishment is wrong, they're always putting themselves through contortions trying to turn killers into saints.

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