A deeper look at the reality of Chicago’s reputation

The Violence Issue

Advocates  Media  Victims  Youth

A Loyola Student Social Justice Publication
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NEVER STOP LEARNING

Congratulations to our journalism students on the newest issue of Mosaic. Their commitment to lead, to serve, and to live extraordinary lives inspires us all.
How do people live their lives each day in Chicago surrounded by violence?

How is it fair that Chicago’s violence is breaking news in newspapers and on television, but those who work diligently and endlessly to halt acts of violence don’t get any media coverage at all?

That’s pertinent to our issue — bringing a positive light to those working to end violence and to break stereotypes.

In addition, the staff of this magazine had a mission to dig deeper into stories to find the human connection. From an organization serving school children, to a South Side Rapper/Music Director, to a retired Chicago police officer, to a pediatric emergency room/child abuse doctor at one of the city’s busiest children’s hospitals, we found those human connections.

We traveled to the neighborhoods most affected by the violence: West Garfield Park, Englewood, Hyde Park, Austin and more. Through the interviews, photographs and videos, our staff remained dedicated and professional.

Throughout the design process, we found ways to illustrate these stories clearly and effectively. We used photographs, data and other graphics to bring the people, organizations and neighborhoods to life on each page.

What we found when investigating is bigger than just the stories in this magazine. With the city facing what can be considered to be a crisis, individuals and organizations across the city are dedicating their time and talents to service that promotes justice.

Here at Loyola we don’t just commend that behavior, we strive to live it through cura personalis, or caring for the whole person. This value is one of the five we are taught from day one on campus.

In the end, this experience has taught us more about reporting and opened our eyes to the people at the heart of Chicago. These lessons aren’t taught in the classroom but out of it, and because of this experiential learning opportunity, we are extremely grateful.

Without all of our dedicated reporters, photographers and designers this magazine would not have been possible. We also would like to thank our professors, John Slania and Jessica Brown for their guidance.

Sincerely,

BLAKE KELLER AND AMANDA MCDONALD

Being from Detroit, I know what it’s like for a city to be sensationalized in the media for an undeserved violent reputation. If you take a deeper look at both cities, there are organizations, advocates, and young people that strives to help those negatively affected by violence.

I grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, where violence, especially in my neighborhood, was extremely rare. After going to school in Chicago for almost four years, I now know that violence not only affects so many people in the city, but that it’s become the norm.
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Despite stretch of no homicides, more people shot in Chicago this year than last year

Understand Chicago, Understand Rising Urban Crime

Chicago records 762 homicides in 2016, up 57 percent from previous year

Trump calls for 'federal help' to combat Chicago violence

Chicago has had more homicides this year than New York and Los Angeles combined

Chicago hits grim milestone of 700 murders for 2016 and the year's not over

Gordon: Why is UN silent on murders in Chicago?

By Kristian Javier (philstar.com) | Updated October 3, 2016 - 3:04pm

WEEK IN REVIEW: At least 16 more dead as Chicago tops 100 homicides, keeping pace with a bloody 2016
avid Olson sees it splashed across the front pages every week: 2016 was Chicago’s most violent year in two decades. But unbeknownst to many Americans, Olson explains that those headlines don’t always provide the full picture. “Numbers of murders are about half of what they used to be, and violence in general is about half of what it used to be,” said Olson, 50, a criminal justice and criminology professor at Loyola University Chicago.

In the wake of a wild election season, 2016 crime rates were under a microscope in order to evaluate the success of America’s criminal justice system. Although multiple U.S. cities experienced an increase in gun violence last year, Chicago seemingly earned national attention due to the 27 percent decrease from the 1992 count.

But criminologists like Olson look at the bigger picture when studying violent trends. Before coming to Loyola, Olson spent much of his career working with the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, an organization tasked with evaluating the Illinois criminal justice system and developing programs and policies to ensure the system operates efficiently.

“It’s had a chilling effect on police practices,” Lombardo said, “but I guess it’s far easier [for the media] to listen to those who raise their voices like Black Lives Matter.”

No matter which way you look at it, media holds a unique power to mold the public view of any major issue. With that power, the media shoulders the responsibility to not only inform the public with key happenings in the community, but to prevent inaccurate narratives from circulating.

“The homicide rate in Chicago has always been relatively high compared with other cities,” Olson said. “Why is it that now we’re concerned?”

Olson doesn’t have an exact answer to that question, but he can think of one viable response: “Because that’s a good story.”
Violence has changed over the years; Public perception has not
Violence has changed over the years; Main said.

Frank Main, a journalist at the Chicago Sun-Times, has seen this violence firsthand, covering crime and criminal justice since the beginning of his career in 1987. What started out as an entryway into the Tulsa World soon became a path he would follow to the Chicago Sun-Times in 1998. He has even won a Pulitzer Prize for his work.

Having spent almost two decades on that beat, he has certainly seen changes in the crime patterns of Chicago, but has also been an observer to the city’s lack of progress in its response to violence.

“I see the same things occurring over and over again. It’s like Groundhog Day,” Main said.

According to the Chicago Murder Analysis report, the number of murders per year peaked in 1992 at 940. This number has been on a steady decline ever since.

However, given recent headlines and the proliferate crime coverage by the media, some may be surprised to learn that the late 2000s tallied some of the lowest violent crime rates this city has seen in decades.

“People tend to have a short memory of how violent Chicago has been in the past,” Main said.

Dr. Arthur Lurigio is the director for Loyola University Chicago’s Center for the Advancement of Research, Training and Education in addition to his work in psychology and criminology.

He noted that there was an “upick” in the number of homicides last year, as 2016 passed 700 murders, but rates across the country and in Chicago itself are the lowest they have ever been.

Why, then, does Chicago’s perception act one of the most dangerous cities persist?

Several factors contribute to the media’s disproportionate coverage of crime in Chicago.

The 24 hour news cycle, social media and the shift from print to digital have all affected the public perception of the issue. Jeremy Gorner, a journalist who has been covering crime in Chicago for 11 years, currently works for the Chicago Tribune as the beat reporter for the police department. He covers topics ranging from street crime and policy to police misconduct.

“The 24 news cycle has really changed a lot,” he said. “We have reporters working around the clock on news stories.”

This allows for more frequent coverage of crime. Lurigio said it is a “major area of interest of the general public” that readers expect in the news cycle.

Lurigio said that gang violence has also changed over the past few decades. Many of the gangs, in which “there was some motivation to maintain control over violence” have been dismantled, and crime is less organized with fewer people calling the shots.

Innocent bystanders are at a higher risk of being killed because murders take place more publicly in riskier methods, such as drive-by shootings.

“What makes us so angst-ridden in Chicago...are the deaths of people that are incidental,” Lurigio said.

Gorner also said that social media has affected the public’s awareness by reaching a different audience.

“Younger audiences don’t really read newspapers, they get everything online,” he said. “Social media has done a lot to increase awareness beyond the more traditional mediums.”

In addition, the shift from print to digital platforms and the presence of social media affects the amount of coverage and the type that is prioritized.

Main said that initially, papers were accused of “cherry-picking” murders that were the most sensational because there was only so much space a daily newspaper could allow for crime stories. With the dawn of the digital era, much more reporting could be published online.

Main said that for a number of reasons, “we decided to cover every single murder.”

After a particularly bloody Memorial Day Weekend in 2009, the Sun-Times created Homicide Watch, a community oriented news site, to document every murder in the city.

Main noted that this came from good intentions to provide equal coverage, but said “this coverage will make you think that you’re in a super dangerous place.”

Headlines that have resulted from this trend utilize scoreboard reporting tactics, which read “X many shot this weekend, X many dead,” and are typically on the front page or at the top of the homepage every Monday morning.

Main said that the news also operates as a business with online traffic driving sales.

“You would be surprised at what kind of clicks you get from readers from those types of stories,” he said.

While these stories may have been intended to keep the public informed, they have had other unintended consequences.

“I think the media has an obligation to be truthful with the public,” Lurigio said. “Scoreboard reporting, however, only serves to make people more fearful of crime. It always serves to fuel the perception that the city as a whole is dangerous.”

Finding the balance between truthful, inclusive coverage and painting a realistic picture of the situation is difficult.

“As reporters, we approach every story with neutrality. That’s what we’re supposed to do,” Gorner said. “But you’re not going to please everybody.”

Main also has issues with the current state of the media. He said that if you do not live in certain neighborhoods and have no gang affiliations, you are unlikely to encounter violence-related issues.

“I struggle to write stories that provide that perspective,” he said. “It’s hard when you have the daily drumbeat of violence coverage to tell people the nuanced message that it’s not everyone, it’s a small segment of society that is being subjected to unbelievable levels of violence.”

Main said his profession needs to “redesign the daily drumbeat and have reporters who can look at patterns and explain to people the context of what’s going on out there,” and that as long as that style of reporting is in place, there is hope for more nuanced coverage.

“If we lose that aspect of reporting, it just goes to a daily police blotter.”
In 2002, after a steady decline of homicides, the murder rate begins to climb once again. 1992 was the most violent year in Chicago.
In 2010, the number of homicides the city saw was the lowest in nearly two decades.

NUMBERS DON’T LIE

Chicago has been given the nickname ‘Chiraq’ and the ‘murder capital of the world.’ Gunfire, homicide, and crime plague the city with a violent past and rising murder rates. The nation views Chicago as a dangerous city with no room for improvement.

However, murder rates in the past decade were the lowest numbers the city has seen.
POLICE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LACK OF JOBS AND RESOURCES IN THESE COMMUNITIES. THIS IS A SOCIAL PROBLEM.
Retired officer shares his side of the story

BY ADRIANNA UNZUETA

Chicago Police Officer Gerardo Garcia was sitting in his patrol car in the Southwest neighborhood of Englewood when he received a call from officers in the 11th District. There was a man in an apartment shooting at his mother and girlfriend who also threatened to shoot his children if police were sent to his home. Despite the threat, Garcia, along with two other officers, arrived at the scene ready to take action.

Garcia and the officers found the man hiding in the closet with his children. They told the man to come out, but the shooter and the children remained silent. During hostage situations, it is police procedure to avoid the impulse to take immediate action.

“We went against procedure but we felt like we had no time. The other two officers were taking the closet door down, and I was standing facing the closet with my gun pointing directly in front of me not knowing what to expect. As the door falls, I see the man holding his two kids with one arm and pointing a gun at me with his other arm,” he said.

The next thing Garcia remembers was himself on top of the man, grabbing his gun and shooting it towards the wall. Everyone made it out safely, and this is when Garcia realized he no longer wanted to be a patrol officer.

“You think you can save the world, but the world does not want to be saved.”

These are the words of Garcia, a 59-year-old retired Chicago Police Officer, who left the force in 2012 after having witnessed 30 years of the city’s violence.

Garcia, a father of four, now spends his time traveling between his two homes in Chicago and Las Vegas. Rewind 35 years, and Garcia’s life was anything but restful. At 26, Garcia knew he wanted to do more with his life than just work in the railroad industry.

“I was married with three kids. The railroad job paid well, but I wanted to do something for the community,” Garcia said.

Garcia said that after his six-month training period when he began in 1981, he was assigned to patrol Englewood, one of the most violent neighborhoods in the city. The three years he spent patrolling were amongst the most impactful of his entire career and are the reason for his perspective on violence.

“I was young and naive when I started,” Garcia said.

He explains how working in a violence-stricken community made him see the worst in humanity.

“After about three years, I was psychologically really beat up. I don’t think it made me less caring. I was just tired.”

Dan Mahoney, now retired, was a Chicago Police Officer for 17 years and a sergeant for 13 years. He worked with Garcia for about 10 years as his supervisor.

“Gerry was a fantastic police officer. He knew his job well and did not need a lot of supervision. I was confident that he would get any assignment I handed him done correctly,” he explained.

It’s 2017 and Chicago is still deep in violence, but now, the roles have changed. Instead of protecting the city from criminals, violent interactions between law enforcement and civilians have painted police officers all over the nation with a negative image. Countless lives have been lost as a result of police brutality.

The Chicago Police Department has recently proposed a policy change that only allows them to use their firearms if there is no other alternative. The Department is putting a focus on using “de-escalation” tactics and calmer approaches to reduce the number of violent confrontations.

“There are plenty of gun laws. They just aren’t being enforced. Now cops are not going out and approaching people when they see something going on because they are scared of looking racist,” Garcia said.

Robert Lombardo, associate professor of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Loyola University Chicago and also a retired Chicago police officer, says the media portrays a misconception of violence and the police.

“Police are not responsible. This is a social problem – the lack of jobs and resources in these communities. It is beyond the responsibility of the police,” Lombardo said.

Garcia said that police officers are regular people that want to do good. His biggest concern is not for criminals or law enforcement, but rather, for the families living in violent neighborhoods seeking peace.

“The media never gets both sides of the story,” Garcia said. He wants the public to know that police officers are not the bad guys.

“It takes one bad police officer to make 13,000 officers look bad,” he said. “That’s what’s missing in the world. Humanity needs more integrity.”
For some Chicago high schoolers, the journey to school each day is littered with the city’s violence.
if they weren’t victims themselves.

“The trauma that students experience as a result of violence affects how they learn in the classroom and their ability to be their best selves,” Schmidt explains.

This is certainly the case for Rogers, who commutes to Edgewater from her Uptown home to attend Senn.

“There would be things you wish you hadn’t seen, but you can’t really get rid of them because you’ve seen them so young,” recounted Rogers in her description of a typical trip to and from school.

Rogers grew up with violence all around her, calling her encounters with brawls and crime scenes “the everyday Chicago life” that forced her to mature at an expedited rate. Although Rogers claimed she is used to witnessing violence in the streets, she wasn’t so prepared to receive the news that her cousin was shot five times one summer night June 2016.

“It was horrible,” Rogers said. “I’ve never seen so many tubes coming out of somebody’s body before. But he did survive, and that’s what [I’m] happy for.”

Rogers’ cousin was one of 10 victims of gun violence in Chicago that day, and one of over 400 victims during the month of June 2016.

That statistic wouldn’t surprise Mariah Rivera, a classmate who, like Rogers, is no stranger to violence.

“In Chicago, [violence is] an everyday thing,” said Rivera, 15. “When I was a freshman, I remember getting off the train and seeing that this boy I knew from my neighborhood was shot. I didn’t even know what was going on at first, I just saw the yellow tape and detectives everywhere.”

Rivera exudes a tough exterior, admitting to her part in a couple of physical altercations near Senn after classes were dismissed. Still, Rivera often finds herself fearful for her safety as she makes her daily trek from Edgewater to her home on the West Side.

“I watch on the news a lot of girls walking home who either get taken or raped...it’s scary. I never used to pay attention [to violence] when I was a kid, but as I’ve grown up, I’ve had to pay attention more, and be very wise about what I see and what I hear,” she said.

Rivera’s classmate Somi Boyd, 16, can relate.

“I guess I live in fear,” said Boyd, who recently returned to Chicago after living in Oakland, California for the last two years. “[I feel unsafe] a lot of the time, but I kind of have to take a deep breath and assume the best of people.”

Boyd cannot recall a time in her life when violence hasn’t played a role. Throughout her childhood, Boyd moved around between Chicago, Minnesota and California, and the violence encountered in each place took a toll on her family’s dynamic.

“One day, we had to physically pick this guy up and throw him out of our house [in Oakland]. He picked up a gun on the street,” Boyd said. “It was a kid.”

Boyd cannot recall a time in her life when violence hasn’t played a role.
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brick and threatened to hurt us, so my dad had to toughen up for all of us,” Boyd said. “There’s never really been a time [for my family] when it’s just peaceful.”

As she settles back into Chicago through her life at Senn, Boyd is reminded of the impact of violence on her “dysfunctional” family each time she sees a hallway brawl or an armed individual walking near campus.

“You can’t really get away from violence,” Boyd said. “There’s no safe place, really.”

Regardless of their tough backgrounds, these inspiring young women choose to see the positive possibilities created by their education at Senn rather than dwell on the negative aspects of their circumstances.

“I feel like education can be my change and everyone else’s, too, if they just try,” Rogers said.

As the teacher and director of journalism at Senn, Michael Cullinane certainly tries to facilitate some of that change as his students file into the vast expanse of computers that is room 343 every afternoon.

“We talk a lot about the skills of storytelling,” said Cullinane, 39. “I think there’s a connection between silence and violence, so I really try to promote that conversation and [storytelling] to create a sense of healing.”

Cullinane spent much of his career teaching English at a private school in the suburbs, unsure of how things would run upon switching from a “wealthy, coddled” student body to a less sheltered group from the inner city. Now in his fourth year at Senn, Cullinane seems to learn as much from his students as they learn from him.

“I respect the students at Senn because they’ve got pasts that they’ve had to overcome, and I think it could make them into strong leaders because they’ve had [those experiences],” said Cullinane.

Perhaps we can all learn from the Senn High School students, as they look not for revenge upon those who have hurt them, but for ways to use their pain to spark a change in the community.

“Our ancestors didn’t fight for us to fight each other,” Rivera said. “They fought for us to be free, to be individuals, to have an education. We should be happy that we have that.”
race Donovan stares at the piles of case files spread across her office desk.

She leads a busy life as an assistant state’s attorney, and at times the caseload becomes unwieldy. But each file still represents a person, and Donovan, 27, still has the passion to represent them in court.

“I’ve always told myself the second I become jaded, or start to look at the people I’m prosecuting as a name and not an actual human being, that’s when I’m going to leave,” she said.

That day yet has to arrive.

Donovan works for the Cook County state’s attorney’s office. She never thought law school would have been the path she wanted to take in her life. Growing up, she was very involved in volunteer work, and loved it.

Donovan knew she wanted to follow a career path that involved helping people when she began attending Notre Dame University. After taking a class about disabilities her senior year, she realized she wanted to represent those in need, so she thought she should go into disability law.

“I thought, I’m going to go to law school and help these people who are being mistreated,” she said.

Donovan ended up finding out that, in disability law, attorneys don’t always get to know their client or see them face-to-face. Part of the reason she chose this field was to be able to work directly with people, and she was disappointed.

So, she decided to go into delinquency law because she felt she would not only get to directly help people, but also get to know her clients personally. Delinquency lawyers, she explained, work with minors accused of committing crimes.

“I get to help these minors be restored to functioning members of society,” she said.

Donovan deals with crime cases every day. She works with minors who have been charged with gun violence, drug abuse, and other crimes that affect thousands of Chicago youths.

When she was transferred into the Cook County Juvenile Detention center about a year ago, most people working there warned her it would be predominantly drug cases that she would see, and only one or two gun cases.

“Since I have been transferred to the delinquency court room it’s turned into attempted murders, murders, almost all gun cases, robberies, and less drugs,” Donovan said.

Donovan believes in something called “restorative justice,”
a form of justice that focus on rehabilitating people that have committed crimes and allows them to become functioning members of society.

She beams with excitement to talk about several minors who she has seen rehabilitated from the justice system. She strives to help every minor she works with get back on the right track. One 17-year-old, who came into the delinquency center with minor charges, excelled in the center. He started out not doing well in school, and eventually learned how to read well in the center. Donovan knew this child had great potential, and when he was given a safe environment, he succeeded.

Donovan’s co-workers have high opinions of her. Deme Siakavelis represents children in foster care for the Illinois Department of Children and Family services, and she works with Donovan firsthand.

“She is so caring to every single client she works with, and you can tell she does it because she cares and truly loves her job,” Siakavelis said.

Donovan knows how hard her job is, but she is passionate about it, day in and day out.

“If you don’t like [your job], I think you have to leave,” she said.

Since Donovan began working for the Juvenile Center, the amount of gun violence cases in Cook County has skyrocketed. She has noticed a huge trend particularly in minors charged with gun violence.

Because juveniles often face less severe penalties, many gangs will involve children in violent crimes. Donovan thinks most gang members have smartened up about cheating the system.

Donovan knows that violence is not something that can simply be stopped, but she hopes she will be able to restore these minors back into society with the help of the justice system. As for the future, she doesn’t know where her career will take her, but she hopes to be able to continue to help people.

“Whatever I do, even if I don’t stay in this department,” she said, “I know I want to help people.”
Loyola’s Multimedia Journalism Program wants to acknowledge the hard work of our journalism students, and commitment to knowledge, truth, and social justice represented in these pages. Our program exemplifies a distinctive practice, system, and philosophy of reporting with integrity coupled with using the latest technological advances to tell stories that people need to know about.

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When Dr. Venna Ramaiah gets home from a late night emergency room shift, she often only has a few hours to close her eyes, ease her mind and rest. The next morning, she has to go to work again, digging through files, seeing patients and trying to solve child abuse cases.

The 45-year-old pediatric physician splits her time between ER and child abuse work at the University of Chicago Comer Children’s Hospital, located in Hyde Park on the South Side of Chicago. Ramaiah treats children in one of the most violent neighborhoods in the city where shootings rose in 2016 nearly 12 percent, according to the Chicago Tribune.

“[This] idea that I can see one kid who has a bullet in his shoulder and two weeks later I can see a kid who has a bullet through his lung or his heart or his aorta and he didn’t make it, and the difference is six inches,” Ramaiah said. “I have been here since 2000, and we just see a lot of that on the South Side of Chicago.”

The physician and second generation Indian American started medical school in 1991 studying to be an obstetrician at Albany Medical College in New York. She ended up in pediatrics with a special interest in child abuse. After completing her residency, she became American Board certified in pediatrics and sub board certified in child abuse.

“There’s a lot of layover because in the
emergency medicine world you have to learn a lot about injuries,” Ramaiah said. “You’re deciding if something needs to be treated, how it needs to be treated... and so the segue into child abuse work is actually pretty natural.”

Her time in the emergency room is usually spent treating level one traumas and blunt traumas. Level one trauma centers are able to care for a patient throughout their stay—from the initial screening until the care and rehabilitation process, according to the American Trauma Society. They also place a high level of focus on patient education.

National penetrating trauma rates, or stabbings and gunshot wounds, are about 6 percent of injuries among level one trauma centers, while Comer’s are nearly double that, according to Ramaiah.

While in the ER, Ramaiah works with Dr. Lisa McQueen, the director of the Pediatric Residency Program and the Pediatric Emergency Fellowship Program. McQueen credits Ramaiah with being a calm, level headed and trustworthy physician, which is not easy in her line of work.

“If there’s a controversial case or a patient who has been in the news...she remains really objective,” McQueen said. “I think that allows her to always have the highest degree of integrity.”

Dr. Jill Glick, the medical director of the Child Advocacy and Protective Services (CAPS) office where she and Ramaiah also work with child abuse victims, believes Ramaiah is well suited for both the ER and child abuse.

“I recognized immediately...that she was interested in the medicine forensically, through her ER work she recognized the huge need and demand in doctors willing to work with child welfare, police and various agencies including going to court to help the society respond to the issue of child abuse,” Glick said.

With a majority of her time spent treating children who have been injured or abused, regardless of intention, Ramaiah said it is easy to get burned out, especially through all of what she calls “mental gymnastics” from one specialty to the other.

“When we have a really horrific abuse case, or in the ER if I have a death from a trauma... one thing that we have to have as physicians, especially in the ER and even more importantly with child abuse work, is the ability to compartmentalize,” Ramaiah said. “And even after all of these years of doing it, whenever I have to tell a parent that their child died, I get teary eyed...it sounds silly [and] I don’t want to seem less professional, but we are all human.”

Part of how she compartmentalizes is by spending time with her husband and two daughters, running or traveling. She is also thankful for cable television that allows her, after a long ER shift that ends around 11 p.m., to come home and watch reruns of “Friends” or “Big Bang Theory.”

By July, Ramaiah hopes to shift her 50 percent split between the ER and child abuse work into 30 percent ER and 70 percent child abuse because as she gets older, child abuse cases are more interesting to her while ER work is more strenuous.

“We would love it if we didn’t have consults anymore,” Ramaiah said, “if there wasn’t as much concern or incidents of abuse, but I don’t think that’s going to happen anytime soon.”

At the end of the day Ramaiah is still a mother, wife, daughter, sister, coworker, teacher and friend, no matter what happens inside the hospital. This idea keeps her three worlds—ER, child abuse and home—balanced.

“I go home and I hug my kids harder and I tell my family that I love them,” she said, “because what you really come away with is the sometimes unpredictability of life.”

Although she spends all of her time at Comer Children’s Hospital, Dr. Veena Ramaiah treats both emergency and child-abuse patients. PHOTOS BY AMANDA MCDONALD
sunlight flowed through the windows of a fall-decorated classroom as Dion McGill entered. Excitement could be seen on each of the faces of the 32 6th graders.

Of course, having a guest speaker, they probably thought they were going to take a break from learning. This notion would have been far from the truth.

McGill asked the students, “How does the violence in Chicago make you feel?”

One student said, “It makes me feel sad and mad because people die.”

Another said, “It makes me feel scared.”

As program manager of the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence, McGill frequently visits high schools and elementary schools in Chicago for student workshops.

His goal is to start conversations with kids about bullying, violence in the media, violence in their communities, and most importantly, what they can do about violence.

Handgun violence is nothing new to the students at Sawyer Elementary, located in the southwest Chicago neighborhood of Gage Park.

The Friday before McGill’s visit in October, shots were fired during the school’s soccer game. Three weeks before, two students were shot at a block party just blocks away from the school.

McGill went on to ask the students a series of questions pertaining to statistics about the violence in Chicago. They all eagerly raised their hands to try and guess the answers.

On average, 14 people are shot and three are killed every day in Chicago.

“So we know that there’s a problem, but what do we do about it? I’ve got a proposal for you. Don’t worry, it’s not that kind of proposal. I ain’t got money for no ring, sister,” McGill joked, evoking laughter from the students.

“First things first,” McGill began.

“What’s a great conversation you can have when you go home today?”

One student said, “I’m going to tell my mom what I learned at school.”

McGill asked, “Are you going to astound her with your newfound knowledge? You’re going to ask, ‘Mom, do you know how many people were killed in Chicago this year?’”

“She gonna be like, ‘noooo.’”

“And you’re gonna tell her, ‘630 people!’” McGill gasped like a terrified mother, causing a sea of laughter.

“We gotta speak up, talk, and educate,” McGill said to the students. “Start with your parents, move on to your uncle, then your friends...We need to create a positive ripple effect.”

He explained that a lot of people know there’s a problem, but they don’t know how bad the problem is. Therefore, one solution is to raise awareness.

McGill went on to explain the 2013 case of the 15-year-old Hadiya Pendleton. She and her friends were walking home on a rainy day and took shelter under a bus stop when a car drove by, firing shots.

Hadiya was killed. Her friends and family thought of the idea to wear orange to honor her.

The concept went viral, and thousands of people, including celebrities like Jason Bateman, Julianne Moore and even President Barack Obama wore orange clothing on June 2 (Hadiya’s birthday) and tweeted about it.

McGill asked, “Why do you think they chose the color, orange?”

One student raised her hand, “Because it’s their favorite color?”

McGill laughed politely and then explained that hunters wear orange to tell other hunters not to shoot them because they’re human. He said that by raising awareness you get people to stop and think.

“Sometimes stop and think is the best thing you can get people to do,” he said.

McGill is a licensed Illinois state educator with experience teaching at both the middle and high school levels, as well as a U.S. Army veteran. He also has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Sciences from Saint Xavier University.

“I’m passionate about teaching because I get to help make the future of this world better,” McGill said.

Erik Arroyo, the College and Career Coach at Sawyer, was part of the staff that decided to bring McGill in to begin having workshops with classes.

“Another counselor and I at the school got Dion’s card through a friend and we had a meeting with him,” Arroyo said.

“He’s had such a positive effect on the students. Sometimes when I go into a class, I can see that the students are disappointed if I haven’t brought McGill.”

“...sometimes stop and think is the best thing you can get people to do.”

— Dion McGill, ICAHV program manager
Educating children about violence is step one of fostering change.
Candace Moore is optimistic about the drop in suspension and expulsion rates in Chicago Public Schools, but worries that the city may be straying away from confronting the deeper issue.

Moore is a staff attorney at the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law where she helps protect educational rights of kids across the city by providing direct representation for students facing expulsion due to policy work. She is passionate about eliminating CPS’s zero tolerance policy, which includes tough disciplinary practices that were in place until a few years ago.

The policy reflected a national trend that began in the 1990s starting with President Bill Clinton’s crime bill, said Jon Schmidt, clinical assistant professor of education at Loyola University Chicago.

The thought, Schmidt said, was, “If we really clamp down on disciplinary behavior and rid it out immediately, that would be the solution...[but] it hasn’t really worked out that way.”

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning has found that suspensions, which were very popular under the zero tolerance agenda, have been shown to actually lower achievement while also leading to higher drop-out and incarceration rates.

“Restorative justice was really available all the way back to the 1990s,” Schmidt said. However, it has historically been presented as an option for schools, not a requirement.

Schmidt said the turning point was in 2014: “[CPS Superintendent] Barbara Byrd Bennett delivered a press conference and said we are suspending and expelling far too many students of color.” Now, they have become “the norm and expectation.”

“CPS doesn’t have a ‘zero tolerance policy’—far from it. We emphasize restorative justice,” said CPS communications director Emily Bittner.

The restorative justice practices Bittner is referring to include partnering with outside groups and taking time to check in with students throughout the school day. To some extent, these practices have been successful.
On Sept. 22, 2016, CPS announced that expulsion and both in-and out-of-school suspensions reached an all-time low. According to CPS, out-of-school suspensions decreased by 67 percent while expulsions decreased by 74 percent since 2012, when the disciplinary shift began.

A University of Chicago study found that during the 2009-10 school year, approximately 25 percent of high school students received at least one out-of-school suspension each year. By the 2013-14 school year, that rate dropped to 16 percent.

"It is a good thing that suspensions and expulsions have dropped tremendously," said Moore. "When you have exclusionary discipline as the rule, you create a situation where many students just aren't even getting a second chance to come back and learn from those mistakes."

Now the school district has created an Office of Social and Emotional Learning, which partners with CASEL, to spearhead the change in disciplinary practices.

In a punitive disciplinary system, CASEL explained, misbehavior is seen as "breaking rules" and "disobeying authority," whereas in a system focused on restorative justice, misbehavior is "harm done to one person/group by another."

Another key difference between punitive and restorative practices is what the focus is on. CASEL believes a punitive system focuses on "establishing what rules are broken and who's to blame," while a restorative system focuses on "problem solving, relationship-building and achieving a mutually-desired outcome."

A key change in policy that's taken place during this transition is state bill SB0100. This bill, sponsored by Sen. Kimberly Lightford (D-Westchester) and Rep. Will Davis (D-Hazel Crest), makes changes across the state, most notably limiting the maximum length of a suspension to three days unless the student poses a threat. It has been in effect since Sept. 15, 2016.

At its foundation, the bill aims to make exclusionary discipline policies, such as suspension and expulsion, a last resort. It is one of many bills which have made changes regarding a suspended student’s re-integration into the classroom.

Previously, a student could be suspended and miss up to two weeks of class and schools were not required to help these students make up missed work. Because of SB0100, students are given that chance.

Antonio Magitt, 18, is a senior at Roosevelt High School who was regularly disciplined at school until recently. He has attended five schools, mostly due to expulsions.

"It's good that we have a bill like SB0100," Magitt said. He feels that the bill would have benefited him if it were implemented earlier. While at Roosevelt, Magitt said he was suspended for two weeks after a verbal argument with a guidance counselor who he felt was mistreating him.

"I shouldn't have stayed out of class for two weeks," he said. "I ended up failing so many classes for that."

Moore said this bill is important "because it's the first time the state has done legislation that's really highly focused on the student-to-prison pipeline."

"Every school in the state is going to be playing by the same rules," she added, which is a significant change, especially for students that attend charter schools.

Right now, the implementation phase of the bill is underway.

"It's great that we have new laws on the books," said Moore, "but it only matters if people follow them."

An issue that both Moore and Schmidt agree on is that CPS needs to work on enabling teachers to be prepared to handle disciplinary situations in the classroom.

"Teachers are now being encouraged, in some ways mandated, to keep kids in the classroom where a year ago, two years ago, they could say that’s it, you've got to go," Schmidt said.

"As a teacher, I feel like my hands are tied because before I would remove them from the school, but now I can't do that," Moore said. She explained that for the most part, teachers aren't given another way of dealing with behavioral problems.

Outside organizations are beginning to give CPS teachers the training to deal with these types of situations, which has not been a requirement in the past, Schmidt said.

Although restorative justice practices have resulted in decreased suspension and expulsion rates, Moore thinks Chicago should be investing its money in “counseling, social work, [and] mental health”—things that are known to work but have been avoided because they require financial resources, which have been hard to find with the continuous budget cuts.

While restorative justice initiatives have shown measurable improvements, they can only do so much.

“Students were having undesirable behaviors because of something,” Moore said. “To me, the stats around the lowering of the rates is good and I applaud CPS for taking that step, but on the flipside of it is the challenge of: did we actually serve our children or did we just change our policy around it and our children are still hurting?”

The most important question remains: “Are these students really being helped?”
Broken Glass

How one moment changed the life of local rap artist Duan Gaines
BY MADDIE SCOTT

As a young teen, Duan Gaines and his sisters threw rocks at spare windows that lay stacked in their basement—breaking the glass. One time, he found a bullet in his home and threw it at the windows.

Months later, some of Gaines’ neighborhood buddies were fighting with another group of guys and said, “We’ve got to get a gun.”

Seeing this as his opportunity to be cool, Gaines grabbed a gun a relative had left at his house. It wasn’t loaded.

Remembering that one, single bullet he had launched through the windows in his basement months ago, Gaines went downstairs. Reaching through the glass, he cut his hand.

“My hand was pouring out blood and nobody wanted to try to get the bullet then. Who knows what would have happened if we were able to get that bullet?” Gaines said.

It’s moments like these, he insists—when he was engaging in potentially dangerous or deviant behavior but was prevented from going all the way—that kept him out of trouble and allowed him to establish himself as a leading figure in Chicago’s rap scene.

As a producer, music video director and rapper (under the name “DGainz”), Gaines has garnered millions of YouTube views on his channel and has over 20,000 followers on Instagram. But his life could have very easily gone differently.

“If I wasn’t making music, I think I would have gone down the same path as my peers,” Gaines said.

Growing up on the South Side of Chicago in the Robert Taylor Homes public housing project, Gaines, 28, was exposed to violence at a young age.

“I remember being scared a lot—never knowing what I was scared of, but just being scared,” he said.

After bouncing around to various schools in Chicago and even spending some time nearby in Hammond, Indiana, Gaines ended up ditching more than 25 days of school in sixth grade—fuel by feeling both disinterested and unsafe.

“I’d never seen anything like it. The students were violent, it was dirty; It was just a whole different switch. I had always been used to a good school environment, so that’s why I started ditching school—I just didn’t like being around those people,” Gaines said.

The following two years only amplified his distaste for school and diminished his sense of safety. By eighth grade, the number of days he skipped had gone up to 60 or 70—and freshman year of high school, at age 14, he went just two days before dropping out completely.

Gaines started making music within a year of dropping out, and music videos naturally followed suit. Still surrounded by violence, he was able to stay out of trouble in part because of his fear of going to jail.

“I always had a fear of going to jail. Obviously I also had a fear of [the streets]—I mean, of course it’s dangerous—but I was more afraid of being locked away. And honestly, the biggest reason I never got caught up in the streets is because I never found it that interesting. I found making music more interesting,” Gaines said.

By 2012, at age 23, Gaines was shooting music videos for almost all the artists at the top of Chicago’s rap scene (Chief Keef, Lil Durk, Tink, Sasha Go Hard and King Louie). These artists helped fuel the explosion of Chicago’s niche style of rap, which came to fruition with Chief Keef’s “I Don’t Like” music video—shot and directed by Gaines.

Keef’s “I Don’t Like” garnered almost 30 million views on Gaines’ YouTube channel before being taken down and re-uploaded on Keef’s channel. Kanye West even remixed the song.

While many of the artists Gaines shoots videos for—Keef included—boast violent lyrics or tote guns in their videos, Gaines does not feel he is perpetuating Chicago’s image as a dangerous city or contributing to the violence.

“I’m not promoting violence; I’m just capturing what I see... At first I was against it, but then there came a point where I would try to show people my other stuff with a different aspect to it, and it’s not what the people want. And that’s unfortunate; they’re drawn to violence. The biggest-selling things in the world are sex and violence. So when I try to give more positive imagery, I lose money; People stop paying attention,” he said.

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The responsibility, Gaines believes, lies with both the producers of music and the consumers.

“I give them all kinds of content,” he says. “There’s a lot of stuff that doesn’t have anything to do with violence, and that doesn’t have the hundred thousand views, the 50,000 views... So that’s on society, not me.”

Michael Lansu, former Homicide Watch Editor at the Chicago Sun-Times, doesn’t think producers are completely innocent, as they perpetuate violent imagery in their videos.

“I think there’s a market for this because it is a representation of a certain area. I think there’s also a consumerism level where there’s a fascination with Chicago South Side gangs,” he said, noting that these artists often perform at shows that are filled with ”young, middle-class, white guys.”

Lansu also blames “The culture. Everyone. The education system. The financial system. The transportation system in the city that prevents people from moving around...”

Matt Muse, a 24-year-old Chicago rapper, shares a similar perspective to Gaines.

“Do I think that it’s possible for that music to incite violence? Yes, I think it’s possible. Do I think it’s the reason people are killing each other? Absolutely not,” Muse said.

While Muse chooses to make positive music and think about how his music might affect people, he does not believe all artists need to be responsible for being socially conscious.

“That’s not what you sign up for as an artist,” he said.

For Lansu, it’s not necessarily the portrayal of a broad kind of violence that leads to issues – but the direct taunting of other gangs in songs.

“The imagery is understandably an artistic representation of the world around them. But if the lyrics are going out of their way to specifically call out other gangs and other gang members, then it’s hard to say that that’s not inciting something,” he said.

One silver lining is that many of these artists are able to escape that cycle of violence thanks to new found success from their music.

“A lot of these dudes are talented,” Gaines said. “Just because they get caught up in a certain lifestyle, they don’t get a chance. Some of these dudes who I’m making videos for that are holding guns have probably never shot or killed anyone. They probably haven’t done anything; they just grow up around it,” he said.

Lil Durk – a Chicago-bred artist Gaines used to make videos for, who now is signed to Def Jam Recordings – is an example of that route to safety.

“[Lil Durk] comes from that type of situation where it’s super violent. And now look at him – traveling the world. He got another shot at life,” Gaines said. “He got his kids out of that, he got his family – you know what I’m saying? He’s not out there killing people and stuff right now.”

Gaines insists he notices a change in ambition with every single person he works with.

“Fortunately, I was good at knowing how to move a camera and edit someone to make them look good,” he said. “So when a person sees himself for the first time like that, it shows them their potential.”

However violent, obscene or inciting the videos Gaines shoots may be, he maintains that they’re portraying someone’s reality – and in turn, providing a way for both himself and the artists he films to create a successful and safe reality. On his hand, as if to serve as a daily reminder of a life that could have gone a different course, there’s still a faint scar from a broken glass window.

Duan Gaines has made videos for some of Chicago’s most well-known rappers. PHOTO BY PEYTON JACOBSEN
SMART Kids

Union League Boys and Girls Club brings Englewood students safe space to learn, play and grow
Briana was a young, “nerdy” girl who struggled to fit in with her classmates and often got made fun of. She lacked self-confidence and no longer enjoyed coming to school, despite her love for learning. For children like her, the Union League Boys and Girls Club provides an outlet to stay off the violent streets of Chicago.

The Union is a city-wide non-profit that promotes all forms of life—development through academic success, good character and citizenship and healthy lifestyle. It serves more than 12,000 children and operates eight sites in Chicago.

The Union offers a class called “SMART Girls,” which helps girls understand themselves and teaches them about healthy lifestyle choices and self-esteem enhancement. Through this class, Briana was able to turn her childhood experience around and become a mentor for fourth graders who are struggling with the same problems she had just two years ago.

“[The organization and this class] made me make friends and like coming to school. I want to help the girls younger than me because I was like them,” she said.

Briana, 11, no longer regrets coming to school and is seen as one of the popular girls.

Onyinyeh Udeh, a former gang member, serves as the site leader for the Union at Stagg Elementary School in the Englewood neighborhood. Udeh, 32, oversees after school programs and gives children a place to learn and grow before going home.

Classes at Stagg are supposed to be capped at 15, but the more popular ones attract 30-40 children. Karate is one of these classes, along with girl’s hip-hop and the newly implemented lyricism.

“I give the kids what they want. They won’t stay after school for something they don’t like,” Udeh said.

Udeh grew up in the San Diego suburb of Skyline with her roots in Nigeria. After completing her undergrad at University of California, San Marcos in 2006, she received her master’s degree from University of Wisconsin, Madison. From there, she relocated to Garfield Park, where she now lives and commutes to Englewood—one of Chicago’s most dangerous neighborhoods.

“Shootings do happen...I’ve heard them here,” Udeh said as she pointed out her classroom window. Stagg has locked down and cancelled after school programs as a result. The students recognize the dangers, but children can’t do much to limit violence.

Udeh was a Bloods gang member through family affiliation, something she felt little control over. “My brothers were Bloods, so I had no choice,” she said. “Growing up in the neighborhood I did make people want to act tough, but that’s not who they are.”

When she first came to Chicago, Udeh began her work at the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center, where she continues as the program coordinator. Since arriving at the detention center, Udeh has mirrored the Union and set up two classes, one for boys and one for girls, that attempt to teach kids about taking the right path in life and not giving in to the temptations of the streets.

Udeh’s breakthrough moment came through volunteering in high school to tutor children at a boys and girls club near her childhood home. She tutored a young girl who loved theater, but struggled with math. After mentoring her through middle school and early high school, Udeh saw this girl on the Disney show, “That’s So Raven.”

“ Seeing that, I knew these clubs were effective in a way that went beyond being a hangout spot for the children,” Udeh said.

It is because of this realization that Udeh hopes to build a future here in Chicago that includes more Union clubs and classes.

“In order to grow, we need more exposure,” she said. “More exposure will lead to more money.”

Unfortunately, since Udeh started at the Union two years ago, she has not seen much change as a result of uninvolved parents and lack of classes offered to children not attending school. But she is trying to fill the void.

“God’s plan is to have me here,” she said. “And, I’m going to do all I can to continue helping children here.”
One day during his sophomore year at Kelly High School in Chicago’s Brighton Park neighborhood, Carlil Pittman lagged behind in the cafeteria after lunch and didn’t get up to go to class when the bell rang.

He had just found out his girlfriend was pregnant. He didn’t act out and wasn’t violent toward anyone, but a security guard noticed him lingering at the lunch table and brought him to the school’s main office, where they proceeded to expel him for low grades.

Pittman is now 23 and works as a youth organizer with Voices of Youth in Chicago Education.

Formed in 2007, VOYCE describes itself as “a youth organizing alliance for education and racial justice led by students of color from across the city of Chicago and Illinois.”

VOYCE works with students living on the South and West sides, giving them a platform and the...
resources to advocate for themselves and their education.

Pittman worked with VOYCE to pass bill SB 100 through the Illinois House of Representatives.

The bill is part of the organization’s “common sense” discipline campaign which pushes for an end to the harsh disciplinary policies employed by CPS.

Before the bill was implemented, students could be suspended up to two weeks for non-violent offenses, such as talking back to teachers or skipping class.

Now because of SB 100, schools can no longer suspend students for more than three days unless they pose a threat to students and faculty. Suspended students must also be given the opportunity to make up their missed work.

SB 100 went into effect Sept. 15, 2016 with the support of state senators and representatives, including Sen. Kimberly Lightford (D-Westchester) and Rep. Will Davis (D-Hazel Crest).

This bill also addresses the larger issue that VOYCE deals with: the school-to-prisonpipeline. This is a theory that states students who expelled or suspended from school are more likely to eventually enter the prison system.

Antonio Magitt, 18, a senior at Roosevelt High School, has been active in VOYCE since his junior year. He now works as an intern at the organization’s Albany Park office with Pittman.

“It stands for exactly what it is,” Magitt said about the organization. “When we get together, it’s led by the students,” and they are encouraged to evolve as activists.

Magitt knows firsthand about the harsh exclusionary disciplinary policies CPS used to have in place and has been affected by them throughout his education, having attended five different schools in his life.

He caused trouble and got into fights throughout elementary and middle school, which got him expelled. He eventually enrolled at an alternative school his eighth grade year after physically assaulting a police officer at school, which led to a two-week suspension and ultimately expulsion.

“I don’t want to say... it’s okay for me to do stuff like that, but I was having a really bad day at the time, dealing with a lot of personal things,” he explained.

Magitt was then transferred to the alternative Banner North Academy in the Austin neighborhood, which he felt left him overwhelmingly underprepared for high school. As a result, his first years at Roosevelt High School got off to a rocky start.

Then he had a revelation the summer before his junior year.

“I came to the conclusion to start changing my ways or else I’m gonna end up either in jail or dead. Luckily I did that and this is where I’m at now,” he said with a grin on his face.

“He’s had a few bad encounters,” Pittman said about Magitt. “...Things that could have been avoided if there was the proper person there for him to talk to. He’s a very intelligent black individual.”

Pittman and Magitt were both victims of the harsh discipline policies employed by CPS until the 2012-13 school year.

These policies were not unique to Chicago. Jon Schmidt, clinical assistant professor of education at Loyola University Chicago, explains that it followed the trend of law and order that was popular across the country starting in the ‘90s with the Clinton crime bill.

The idea, Schmidt said, was to “really clamp down on disciplinary behavior and rid it out immediately.”

“It hasn’t really worked out that way,” he added.

CPS has since shifted from exclusionary to restorative disciplinary policies, which include counseling and after-school programs. The district reports expulsions and suspensions have decreased significantly since these new measures have taken effect.

Out-of-school suspensions have decreased by 67 percent, according to CPS data, while the rate of expulsion has decreased by 74 percent since the policy changes were implemented in 2012.

CPS declined to comment, but did say that their current policy aims to “emphasize restorative justice.”

Although these numbers are encouraging for those at VOYCE, especially Pittman, it does not mitigate the effects the policies had on students like Magitt or himself.

Pittman hopes that the education system his three young sons enter is better than the one that expelled him eight years ago. He vows to continue to fight for better opportunities for all students, both in and outside of school.

“It’s pretty amazing to come from what I came from, to be a young black man on the South Side of Chicago, to actually turn that around and use that as motivation to do this work and make sure it doesn’t happen to other students.”

Carlil Pittman, 23, is one of Voices of Youth in Chicago Education’s youth organizers. PHOTOS BY ALICE KEEFE
The house is getting noisier on a Monday afternoon. The kids have come home from school and are hungry. Snacks are handed out. In a few minutes, everyone will come together to talk about their day before they start preparing for dinner.

After they eat, the kids will do their chores and once again meet in groups, discussing current events, career planning or mental health. Then they will have some free time to call family members, clean their rooms, or complete homework before lights go out at 10 p.m.

At 5:30 the next morning, the kids will do it all over again—unless they have a court date.

In that case, the staff at the Manuel Saura Center in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood where the kids reside will take them to their court appointment.

The center is a residential program that acts as an alternative to juvenile detention, allowing youth to have a secure and stable place to stay anywhere from 24 hours to 30 days.

The Saura Center and similar programs aim to keep youth away from the common stereotypes within the justice system, like institutionalization and repeat offenders, as well as the negative effects of detention centers on children's mental health, education and overall development.

Stephanie Boho-Rodriguez, the Director of the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative Programing in Chicago, has been with the Saura Center since it opened almost 21 years ago.

“We started in 1995 as a pilot program,” said Boho-Rodriguez. “The Cook County juvenile courts were looking for
some alternative programming to secure detention, so they partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and started the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiatives.”

Other similar youth programs in Chicago include home confinement, day or evening treatment, group homes and specialized foster care, according to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency within the U.S. Department of Justice, in a study released in August 2014.

“We are considered to be the most restrictive because the kids actually get court ordered to live here in a residential setting,” said Boho-Rodriguez.

Substitutes to secure detention “were developed in response to research indicating that detention and confinement may do more harm than good” for children, according to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention study.

The number of juvenile arrests in Chicago in 2013 approached 21,500. While that number decreased in 2014 to just over 17,700, 19.1 percent of the arrests in those years resulted in the juvenile going to a detention center, according to a report published by the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, an advisory group dedicated to safeguarding juvenile justice.

The Saura Center receives referral participants directly from the court system or from police departments within the county and can house up to 36 kids at once. The participants range from ages 10 to 17, can be male or female and must have a pending case. Youth with histories of arson, overt sexual behaviors or homicidal or suicidal tendencies are not accepted into the program.

Most participants are assessed as to whether they need to be in secure custody following their arrest. From there, they are either sent home or referred to the center. Referrals can come in 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Once the child arrives at the four-story Logan Square location, he or she goes through an orientation and is assigned a case manager.

Day-to-day activities include craft groups, cooking groups, chores, and on the weekends, outside activities for those who

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A mural was painted in the basement of the Manuel Saura Center in Logan Square by participants within the alternative youth program. It represents going from the dark to the light.

PHOTO BY AMANDA MCDONALD
held a 90 percent success rating in their weekly point and level system. Participants start each day with 100 points, and can lose them based on various offenses such as cursing (five points), verbal abuse to other participants (11 points) or verbal abuse to staff (16 points).

Those who kept their point total above 90 each day are awarded by moving up a level. Certain levels are allowed to travel with the group to see movies, go bowling or to exercise at Planet Fitness, which offers its services for free to the center.

While their schedule is extremely structured, that consistency is key, according to several participants, whose names have been changed to protect their privacy.

“This was a blessing,” said David. “[Juvenile Detention] wasn’t for me. Here, I do chores.”

Another male participant, John, also complimented the structure of each day. “They give everybody a job,” he said.

Matthew commented on being able to connect with the other participants due to their similar circumstances.

“I know everybody in here likes basketball, sports and girls,” he said. “[It’s] a place where I get to come and think.”

The increased violence in Chicago, as homicides have risen in the city by nearly 55 percent compared to 2015, has affected the Manuel Saura Center. The number of children who come in with gun related charges has gone up, said Boho-Rodriguez. Those include unlawful weapons charges, strong-armed robbery and vehicular hijacking with a weapon. She also said the number of 17-year-olds has gone up.

Despite the rise in violent gun offenses, Case Manager Jennifer Lucatero sees the positive effect of the program every day when she comes to work.

“None of them want to be here, but they’re lucky to be here,” Lucatero said. “It’s cool because they come in with a defense mechanism, but you see them act their age again.”

The success rate of alternative programming is promising. Those who participated in alternative treatment programs were significantly less likely to enter into the justice system within a year of completing their program. In addition, boys in alternative programming were seen to have a larger reduction in official criminal referral rates, [and] fewer self-reported criminal activities” than others, according to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention study.

For Boho-Rodriguez, Lucatero and the other staff members, having a participant leave the program “successful,” or leave without getting a violation, is the most rewarding feeling. Instilling the mantra that these kids can do something positive with their lives is the ultimate goal.

“We have to make them wander outside of the street life...[and] let them know that there’s a life outside of gangs,” Lucatero said. “When they get slapped with labels their whole lives they start to believe them.”

The participants see the work the staff does, and many are appreciative.

“They deal with kids with attitude... They take time out of their day to take care of kids they didn’t bring into this world,” said David, who is a high school senior.

Once he leaves the program, he does not want to come back. This is not in a negative sense, but because he wants to go to college. Through clinical and focus groups dedicated to education and college, he learned he has options besides returning into the justice system.

“Once I leave here,” he said, “I want to start my own businesses.”

The center features chalk-board walls, art displays and bunk beds that participants are required to keep clean. PHOTOS BY AMANDA MCDONALD
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High school students across Chicago make their voices heard by creating art against violence
rom a young age, Ireon Roach knew she wanted to do slam poetry. As a second grader, she was stringing together rhymes and not much later, she was watching HBO Deaf Jam poetry sessions with admiration.

Now a senior at Nicholas Senn High School, Roach, 18, finds herself the 2016 winner of Chicago’s Louder Than a Bomb spoken word competition, the co-coach of Senn’s Louder Than a Bomb team, and an advocate for her Englewood community and those affected by Chicago violence.

In fact, Roach finds home in performing her words and participating in Louder Than a Bomb.

“It’s different from theater, where you are just reciting someone else’s words and you can put yourself in there as much as you want to. But when you’ve written something and it’s your truth and you say it, it’s empowering,” Roach said.

At a time when youth are pushing to have their voices heard, Senn isn’t the only high school where students explore violence through art. The Louder Than a Bomb competition alone has sparked 120 teams across the Chicago area. High schools such as Regina Dominican in suburban Wilmette are exploring themes of violence through dance, while on Chicago’s South Side, a vocal ensemble provides a safe space for students to pursue music and respond to violence.

REGINA DOMINICAN

At Regina Dominican High School, the intermediate dance class choreographs solos based on a social justice topic of their choice.

The class, which consists of five students, a range of freshmen through seniors, took on issues of abuse, including child, domestic and verbal abuse, as well as bullying through social media. The students also discussed gun violence in class.

While the students do not have personal experience with many of these topics, Kristen Rybicki, the dance teacher at Regina Dominican, has been using the project as a way to encourage her students to widen their perspectives on these issues.

“I think that encouraging the girls to think beyond themselves and to find a commonality on a global scale is important in fostering compassion,” Rybicki said. “The truth in this is the education – doing their research, becoming knowledgeable, and then sharing that knowledge.”

As part of their research, the students investigated where these issues have existed in history, in their present

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communities and in their own lives.

They then were asked to create solos by investigating what types of movement represent the emotions and situations they were trying to represent.

“Most importantly, these girls were able to pull themselves out of their experience and get into someone else’s,” Rybicki said. “The hope is that they can go on and believe that they can inspire change, that they can create something that speaks the voices of many, and that they can learn and educate themselves in the process in order to share it with others.”

Jennifer Delaney, a junior, choreographed a solo about emotional bullying. She had personal experience with this topic and said that the project helped her address this part of her life and learn how to express her feelings in a medium beyond words.

“You cannot visualize the hurtful words, which is one of the main causes of emotional bullying, but I can try to help other people understand what it feels like by dancing in a way that shows the emotional effects and gives off the impression of loneliness and sadness,” said Delaney, 16. “A lot of people have been bullied at one point or another in their life, so I’m glad I can use movement as a way to connect with people and let them know that they are not the only one going through this.”

MARIE CURIE

Across the city, Curie Metro High School’s Musicality Vocal Ensemble uses their voices to both escape from and address the violence of their South Side community.

After the school closed the musical theater class at Curie, teacher Michael Gibson provided a safe space for his students through the after-school vocal ensemble.

Musicality has a large repertoire that includes many songs related to violence and peace. Over the summer, the group competed on America’s Got Talent, where they performed Demi Lovato’s “Skyscraper” in response to the murder of one member’s sister.

NICHOLAS SENN

Back at Senn, April Potack, a freshman member of the writing club, breaks social barriers through a serial novel exploring the large divide in U.S. public opinion during the zombie apocalypse. In her novel, members of one political party see the members of the opposing party as zombies and vice versa.

“That’s really deep, how you can ignore someone’s belief so much that you disregard their humanity,” said Alexander Laser, English teacher and co-founder of the writing club at Senn. “And she came to that connection on her own.”

Joel Ewing, the head theater teacher at Senn and Louder Than a Bomb coach, has many students who explore violence through spoken word.

Ewing referenced the piece “Anymore,” co-written and performed last year by Roach and then-senior Lawren Carter. The piece was inspired by a fourth of July weekend a few years ago when 78 people were shot.

“I was out of town for that summer but immediately thought of my South and West Side students, like Ireon and Lawren, and just wanted to check in,” Ewing said. “And they expressed they were afraid and didn’t want to go outside, so genuine fear and anxiety. And they found some solace through the writing and wrote this amazing piece. They’ve performed it everywhere.”

Roach sees spoken word as a natural reaction to the violence that she witnesses in her community.

“This art form is an art form of the oppressed,” Roach said. “There’s an urgency to it, and nothing is more urgent than the violence and violent culture of Chicago.”

She believes it is important for those who are directly affected by Chicago violence to give the issue a voice.

“It gets scary because it’s truthful,” Roach said. “You have to admit the faults of your community, the faults of your friends and the people that you know are involved, but you have to sort of make room for evolution as well. There’s so many components and the responsibility of that is on our shoulders.”

With 17 years of experience using spoken word as a tool for expression, Kevin Coval, the founder of the Louder Than a Bomb competition, sees it as an opposing force to the sanctioned violence of Chicago’s segregated communities.

“This is a space where people can escape that imperialism of their own stories and talk for themselves,” Coval said. “I think that Louder Than a Bomb is part of the narrative, of that Chicago cultural renaissance that we find ourselves in the mix of, and I remain impressed and in admiration of the courageous young artists who continue to demand to be more.”
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PHOTOS BY MADELINE WAKENIGHT
NAACP’s push to recruit young members leads to more community awareness

BY DEBORAH ARAUJO

When Rev. Brenda Adele Collins Sheriff was 16-years old, she was peacefully walking with her family at Rainbow Beach at South Shore on a warm summer evening. When they returned to their car, they found the tires slashed. Sheriff recalls her father talking to police, who told them to go home since they “shouldn’t be over here.”

In 1961, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had already started a strong fight against segregation and made Rainbow Beach a battleground for racial equality. Sheriff now strives to make the NAACP as strong as it was when they were fighting de facto segregation in the 1960s.

Since 1909, the oldest grassroots-based civil rights organization in America has helped communities in many ways, from registering voters to fighting against discriminatory laws. Sheriff has been working to restore the NAACP’s power and public recognition, which seems to have been lost in the past few decades.

“I noticed that most of the active members were seniors,” Sheriff said, “and I did not want [the NAACP] to die on my watch.”

Sheriff, 71, stated that her goal is to attract younger members to be active in this group. She has been a card-carrying member of the NAACP since her teenage years, but the 2006 death of her cousin Elva Garner – an active member of the association – pushed her to become more involved with the organization to maintain her family’s legacy.

Born in the segregated town of Cowan, Tennessee, Sheriff moved to Chicago in 1957 and has dealt with racial issues her entire life.

“The situation that the United States is in right now reinforced what I already knew: racism is not dead,” she said.

Recently, Sheriff introduced Andra Medea, a nationally recognized conflict expert, to the NAACP and started an initiative to teach youth how to de-escalate conflict and recognize potentially dangerous situations before they get out of hand.

One concept Medea discusses is “flooding” – the physical and emotional responses that we suffer when we feel out of control – and how to differentiate healthy conflicts from unhealthy, dysfunctional, or predatory ones.

 “[The goal is] teaching professionals – whether it’s a teacher, whether it’s a policeman – to read the signs when something is about to get out of hand and how to better handle that situation...so that the outcome is not violent,” Sheriff explained.

Medea has started a Crowdrise campaign to fund community projects that will teach de-escalation methods to youth at NAACP’s Southside Branch.

“Our target group is young kids in the neighborhoods,” Medea said. “[De-escalation] is a skillset that can change lives.”

These skills include teaching today’s youth how to properly identify what types of conflict they observe by noticing physical and verbal cues. This will enable them to distract themselves from the growing conflict in order to activate different parts of the brain, which will appease threat signals and jump-start rational thought.

The NAACP has also been pushing to introduce obligatory de-escalation training for U.S. police departments in order to minimize police violence.

Sheriff believes the Chicago Police Department’s new superintendent Eddie Johnson “seems to be open to non-traditional methods of providing the protection and service that they are sworn to do.”

The NAACP is hoping that Johnson’s revitalization of the dormant Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) will show civilians and law enforcement professionals simple techniques that can change violent communities from within.

The NAACP has a history of changing not only the public’s view of the African American community, but also the behavior of the government towards it. In 1954, the organization won the Supreme Court case Brown v. Board of Education, which outlawed segregation in public schools.

Now Sheriff and Southside Branch’s president Rose Joshua strive to keep the legal fight going with the help of many influential Chicago politicians, artists, and pro-bono lawyers.

Sheriff also said that one of the main struggles of the organization today is its lack of celebrity personalities, which diminishes attention from the media and lowers public endorsements. The last time the NAACP had a press conference to protest an issue, “the aldermen were the ones in the front and the NAACP was in the back.” The NAACP constantly takes the sidelines of news stories as a present organization rather than an active one.

Sheriff and Joshua have reached out to celebrities who want to improve Chicago neighborhoods to help with events, attract youth, and garner media attention. One such celebrity is Matt Forte, drafted by the Chicago Bears in 2008 and now the running back for the New York Jets. He participated on NAACP’s de-escalation event in November 2016.

Sheriff is dedicated to finding new ways to make Chicago a safer place with the help of volunteers and NAACP members.

“I want to have no regrets once I go,” she said. “I want to have helped everyone that I can.”
or five months, Henry Castillo called the Preston Bradley Center home. The shelter in Chicago’s Uptown neighborhood housed the homeless for 33 years. Then, in December, it was meant to close because of state budget cuts. Castillo, 47, didn’t have an alternative for the shelter.

“There’s a two-year waitlist for the Lincoln Park shelter,” Castillo said. “I wish we had more options.”

The scheduled shuttering of the 72-bed shelter is the latest example of a string of recent closings in Chicago.

In 2015, Chicago had 1,701 emergency shelter beds available, or 17 percent fewer beds than the 2,064 available in 2013, according to the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

Chicago also claimed 7,613 beds in permanent supportive housing in 2015, which is 10 percent lower than in 2014, when there were 8,460 beds, the coalition stated.

In 2015, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago closed two family shelters, St. Francis De Paula Interim Housing and Our Lady of Solace, due to “uncertain governmental funding.” The organization worked to find nearly 100 beds to relocate its 1,726 residents, according to the Chicago Sun-Times.

Similarly, in 2010, a homeless shelter in Lakeview – which had 30 beds – closed due to state budget cuts and in 2011, another Uptown shelter, REST, with 60 beds closed due to the same issue, according to ABC-7.

When there are fewer shelters and beds available, displaced homeless often end up on the streets, or in poorer neighborhoods where they are exposed to violence, author and journalist for homeless issues Jamie Kalven said.

“The outcomes of violence, homelessness and trauma have been huge,” Kalven said.

Kalven attributes Chicago’s homeless problem to the destruction of public housing high rises beginning in the 1990s.

“It was forced relocation. People were forced out of their homes,” Kalven said.

He said that the residents who were left to their own devices with intense poverty and no police protection never saw the improvements promised by the plan.

The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless reported that in 2015 there was an estimated 125,848 homeless people in Chicago.

There are 50 homeless shelters in Chicago, according to the Homeless Shelter Database, an online shelter listing. Of these, six are now located on the city’s North Side, a wealthier residential area.

Kalven said that the spike in violence in the city in the past few years is not solely due to the closing of homeless shelters, but believes the two are related.

Kalven explained that the issues that come with relocation are much deeper and more complicated than they appear. Personal relationships and the sense of belonging to a community are stripped away from the residents of the city’s shelters when they are forced to move.

“One of the consequences of this process of rapid demolition is that the new people don’t know the rules of the new neighborhoods,” Kalven said.

The continuing gang issues that surround the city are associated with the forced merging – through the availability of public housing and shelters – of groups that do not get along and have very different views.

Justin Shuldiner, who worked for the Los Angeles Housing Authority and then with the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) told Kalven about the two main circumstances that differentiate Chicago public housing from other big cities:

“The first one was how poor the people were, and the other was that police had long ago withdrawn from public housing,” Kalven said.

This is in par with what Sunny Fischer, philanthropist and board chair of the National Public Housing Museum in Chicago, sees in the city nowadays. Fischer grew up in a public housing development in New York City’s Bronx neighborhood.

“The development had great schools, a library, a good community... and it was safe,” Fischer said.

“...and trauma have been huge.”

— Jamie Kalven, author

BY DEBORA ARAUJO
Public housing in Chicago has not yet evolved into a development, but is mostly a community with not many perks.

Castillo and his sister, who is living in a threshold (part of the homeless outreach program to help people with serious mental illnesses), both had jobs for years before becoming homeless.

Castillo worked at the Norwegian American Hospital before suffering a knee injury and losing his job. He was forced to seek help from the Department of Housing Services.

“The DHS helped me find a shelter but there weren’t many shelters around [Uptown]. I used to live here so I wanted to remain in the area,” Castillo said.

Castillo also pointed out the issue that many of the shelters still have drug and alcohol problems. He recalled trying to apply to the Aragon shelter with his sister and giving up due to the people he saw outside.

“There were four guys sitting outside passing a beer and a joint,” Castillo said.

On the day it was supposed to close, a generous person donated enough money to keep the Preston Bradley shelter open through winter before its closing. With the uncertainty of the shelter’s future, Castillo’s search for an adequate replacement is not over and will likely take him to other parts of the city.

“There are good shelters out there,” he said. “But we’re being pushed to the South Side.”
Latonya Maley works endlessly to provide resources to victims of the LGBT community.

PHOTOS BY REGINA MERRILL
Latonya Maley creates a striking figure as she strides through the halls of the Broadway Youth Center. In a tea-length '50s style pink dress with black polka dots, wedge heels, and dreadlocks that fall over the tattoos on her dark-skinned shoulders, the 28-year-old self-identified lesbian radiates confidence, femininity, and strength.

Maley is the director of the Broadway Youth Center, a branch of the LGBTQ service provider Howard Brown Health in Lakeview, Chicago, that caters specifically to youth ages 12 to 24.

The temporary space the organization calls home in the basement of the Wellington Avenue United Church of Christ has many rooms, each with multiple purposes. Bright flyers advertising everything from drop-in needs to safe sex practices plaster the bulletin boards.

Services at the center include disease testing, hormone treatment, housing placement for homeless youth, and resources for those who have been victims of physical, emotional, and institutional violence.

Maley said that violence against the LGBTQ community can often go under the radar. It is not always presented in overt forms, such as the 2016 shooting at Pulse, an Orlando nightclub. Violent acts can include everything from micro-aggressions and hate speech to institutions denying access to needs based on a person's appearance or culture.

“I learned one of the biggest ways to make change is through structural change,” Maley said, sitting in the room that doubles as a meeting room and testing room.

Maley has always been a soft-hearted rabble-rouser interested in social justice. This led her to study anthropology and sociology at Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia from 2006 to 2010. It was there that she studied the anthropology of public health, which taught her how structural inequality can lead to poor public health outcomes.

She continued her education at the University of Chicago, earning her masters in public health in 2012.

As a student, Maley volunteered 10 hours a week in a research position at the center. She then became the Youth Sexually Transmitted Infection Prevention Manager, and after working there for three years, she became the director of the entire center. Her rise through the ranks only encourages her passion for LGBTQ youth.

Kylon Hooks, the program manager for drop-in services, said Maley employs a radical management style and treats staff with the same care that is given to young people.

“She is absolutely passionate that young LGBTQ folks have the highest level of care provided to them through the services we offer,” Hooks said.

Maley prides herself on being the kind of director who knows how to do every job at the center. Even in her new administrative role, Hooks explained, "young people have direct access to her, so she doesn’t feel so removed from processes.”

When troubled clients bring violence into the center, the staff focuses on restorative justice methods rather than punishment.

“We know that you’re a person and you are worthy. Period,” Maley said.

A young trans woman she refers to as “Beyonce” was starting fights within the center. The staff recognized that the center was perhaps one of her only resources, and instead of denying her access, they met with her individually to assess her needs and how to meet them. Now, Beyonce has a job and a stable place to live, and she de-escalates fights within the center herself.

Jessi Peters, a junior at Columbia College Chicago, identifies as queer and lesbian and went to the center for STI testing. She lives on the South Side, where access to resources for LGBTQ youth is limited.

“It was very helpful to have a space when you’re young and black in the LGBTQIA community,” Peters said.

She felt privileged for the opportunity to go to places like the Broadway Youth Center where she doesn’t “have to choose and compartmentalize” different parts of her identity.

However, Peters said the center’s northern location in Lakeview makes access to its resources difficult. She wants to open her own center on the South Side.

The center is a place “where people can be their whole selves and figure it all out at a piece at a time,” Peters explained. “But we need more. It’s not enough, but it’s a start.”

Maley said the hardest part of her job is seeing young people do everything within their power, yet remaining unable to make real change in a system that fails them.

“I have a lot of guilt doing this job,” she said. “We can’t give people what they need because of our own boundaries and limitations.”

Maley said one solution to this is increased community involvement and awareness.

The center does cultural competency training with service providers and LGBTQ 101 on high school and college campuses. It is also present in neighborhood community meetings and aims to draw attention to internalized racism.

“The exciting thing is that people are becoming creative about ways we can create safety without calling someone who has a gun,” Maley said.

Maley said the center is “a magic place” that she loves helping to create. It aims to undo stigmas and creates an affirming space in which all bodies are beautiful and worthy.

Her clients inspire her through “the radical act of being themselves,” she said. “These kids inspire me in their bravery and resilience.”

Contraceptives are offered as a reminder of what the Broadway Youth Center provides.
Fierce Faith

Three nuns follow the call to create community

BY JORDAN KUNKEL

They came to Humboldt Park at a time when it was teeming with nuns and screaming with need. They moved into the convent 40 years ago and set to work creating a welcoming center for the community, first at the neighboring school and later within their own home.

Gang violence, prostitution, robberies – these sisters have seen it all. They’ve watched the neighborhood flip from European migrants to Latinos, have watched the commerce and needs change with it, and have remained a constant force in the community.

In a 90-year-old convent on Chicago’s West Side, four Sisters of Providence live, pray and work. Kathleen Desautels, Patricia Fillenwarth, Dorothy Gartland and Pamela Pauloski are the remaining nuns at what once was a 20-sister convent in West Humboldt Park. They work in and out of the neighborhood to promote peace among the struggling members of Chicago’s communities.

With a history of Sisters of Providence in Humboldt Park since 1908, the neighborhood community has formed a strong bond with the sisters.

Dorothy Gartland, 87, said that the convent is one of the few residences in the area without a front gate. In the summer, neighborhood children hangout on their front porch.

Although not quite the same amount of “crime and these shootings like there is now on the south side,” Patricia Fillenwarth, 76, remembers the ‘80s as the period when crime and violence ravaged Humboldt Park. Although the sisters did not experience gang violence on their block, there were incidents on others.

As robberies heavily increased that decade, Fillenwarth noted that residents stopped wearing their gold chains out in public.

“They would never wear them out – they would always tuck them inside or not put them on when they’re outside at all because there was a lot of stealing of that, purses, stuff like that,” Fillenwarth said.

Since then, neighborhood groups such as the Block Club have helped curb crime and increase police presence. As a result, violence in Humboldt Park has significantly decreased.

“Our neighborhood has improved over the years in that we don’t nearly have the gang violence that we did have before,” Fillenwarth said.

Fillenwarth attributes this to gentrification as more invested and stable families move into the neighborhood. Still, many of these families are undocumented and make less than $15,000-$20,000 a year, continuing the need of the Sisters of Providence in the area.

Using her keen eye for community need and her blunt depictions of how to address it, Fillenwarth runs Providence Family Services, the family counseling center she founded in 1994.

Located in the converted front section of the convent, Providence Family Services provides pay-what-you-can services, including ESL classes, an after school homework club, family and couples counseling, and computer classes when there is an affordable teacher available.

As principal for the neighboring Maternity of Blessed Virgin Mary school during the 1980s, Fillenwarth often found herself recommending counseling to parents of her students.

“I became aware of the fact that a lot of problems existing in the family stem from the fact that there was poor communica-
tion and a lack of parenting skills,” Fillenwarth said.

A lack of affordable Spanish counseling led Fillenwarth to leave her position as principal in 1991 and return to school for a degree and license in counseling.

By providing bilingual counseling services, parents with poor English can create stronger home environments in their native language.

Kathleen Desautels, 78, another Sister of Providence, does her work outside of Humboldt Park, but aims to combat many of the societal problems that directly affect members of her neighborhood.

Desautels works as the Justice Promoter for the Eighth Day Center for Justice in Chicago’s West Loop.

Eight Day provides financial support and strategic advice to national and local organizations and committees looking to take a stand against social, political and economic injustice. They also send Eighth Day members to appear with coalitions at rallies and meetings.

The center was founded by six Catholic congregations, including the Sisters of Providence. The organization has expanded to include employees and volunteers from all over the Chicago community.

“Our analysis is such that it gets at the root. We don’t do direct service, so we look at what are the core issues within our society that are at the root of war, or the environmental issue of climate change, or women’s issues in the church and the like. We do a lot of education processes,” Desautels said.

Dorothy Gartland, 87, Sister of Providence, was the original Justice Promoter...
at Eighth Day. She has also taught at St. Mel’s grade school and done philanthropy work for communities in Guatemala and Nicaragua.

“Sort of retired,” Gartland’s work now stays primarily within the convent and Humboldt Park, either among the plants and family photos that clutter her home office or among the homework club and ESL students at the counseling center.

Gartland recalled how leading up to Fillenwarth starting the Providence Family Center, they received a call from a distressed mother in need of guidance. It was a first communion day at the church, and Gartland and Fillenwarth left to visit her.

They found the mother and her six children living among the cement walls of an unfinished basement.

“The cement walls, cement floor, and here are all these beautiful kids and Dorothy was playing with them. I went over to the drugstore to put some calamine lotion on their faces, they were scratching, scratching, scratching with the chicken pox,” Fillenwarth recalled.

While Gartland entertained the children, Fillenwarth consulted with the mother who had been beaten and raped by her husband and was pregnant with a seventh child she could not support.

Fillenwarth said she saw the woman in passing on the street later, still pregnant. She had decided to keep the baby, but because she reached out to the sisters, she had help finding a more suitable living situation at a local shelter.

“She felt like as a woman and as a person she had the right to make that choice. So I was glad to be there to help her through that,” Fillenwarth said.

Stories like these are why Fillenwarth and the Sisters of Providence feel accessible counseling is needed in their neighborhood. No matter where their work takes them, Fillenwarth recognizes that their continued presence and care for Humboldt Park means the most to the people of their community.

The nuns attribute the success of their work in the Humboldt Park and greater Chicago communities to their faith.

Desautels said that her devotion and identity as a nun gives her perspective that she otherwise would not have had when working with these diverse populations.

“I would never know what it’s like to be a person of color and to be on the fringe of the economic, political system, but I do have a little taste of what it’s like to be on the fringe of the Catholic Church,” Desautels said.

As the neighborhood gentrifies, the Sisters of Providence said that they will probably end their more than century-long residency at the convent in Humboldt Park.

They hope that the next generation of Sisters and community activists will choose to place themselves on these fringes of society.

“Sisters should always go where the need is,” Fillenwarth said. ■

Read the full story online at www.mosaicloyola.com
Help I’m in a bad situation and need a place to stay tonight.

Is it an emergency? If so, call 911.

We have three beds open tonight.

Okay, thank you.

Stay safe.
iffani Turner drives up from the South Side of Chicago to make her 7 a.m. shift at the Domestic Violence Hotline. She arrives at the office and begins the routine of logging into the care network, checking emails and the 24 hour texting service.

After connecting her phone line, she checks the most necessary resource: the number of available beds in emergency shelters for domestic violence victims.

On that particular day, of the 142 beds in Chicago for domestic violence victims, there are two beds available. Two beds to service the 2.7 million people living in the City of Chicago. The phone rings.

“All of us operators are empathic. Most of us understand from experience that it is not an easy choice, we are listening to people. They call not because they want a fix, they call because they want someone to hear them,” Turner explained.

She has answered phones at the Hotline for 17 years and has a personal understanding of domestic violence victims. As a child she witnessed her mother’s abuse.

Protection for victims has grown as issues like gender equality and feminism become more commonplace. The passing of legislation, like the 1984 Victims of Crime Act, increased funding for victim focused welfare. This funding comes from fines levied on domestic violence offenders that is then sourced to victim orientated services and compensation.

The modern definition of domestic abuse includes psychological, emotional, financial, sexual and the most visible, physical abuse. This growth in definition is sometimes difficult for victims to comprehend. Victims programs like the Domestic Violence Hotline have the balancing act of being informative about abuse, as well as supportive about realistic options.

Often through the preliminary questions asked by operators, victims will reveal other forms of abuse, such as issues with sexual consent. When consent is not given or sexual contact occurs because of fear, it is considered sexual domestic abuse.

Since many victims struggle with separating from the abuser, mental barriers are put up. The first barrier is an emotional one, as victims are often abused by intimate partners. History, memories, and emotions tie them together and the reality of losing their partner is outweighed by the abuse. Leaving their abusers could isolate victims from family and cultural bonds even further.

“It takes an average of seven attempts for a woman to leave her abuser,” Desai said.

Before her work at the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, Desai was the director of Rainbow House, the largest emergency shelter for domestic victims in Chicago. The shelter, which has since closed, received calls from the Domestic Violence Hotline when victims needed emergency housing.

The second barrier victims face when leaving is a logistic one.

“Two of the biggest issues are employment and housing. Victims can’t leave because they don’t have a place to go, and there isn’t affordable housing. If they don’t have a job they can’t get rental assistance,” Qwyn Kaitis, Director of the Illinois Domestic Hotline, said. “Even if people want to leave they can’t. Financially they can’t, there is a limited amount of shelter space... thousands of victims would leave if they could.”

This balance of giving the victim power and information while not condoning the abuse is the priority of operators as they help domestic violence victims in Chicago. It becomes even more of a challenge when resources like shelters are unable to handle the amount of victims. This is the biggest challenge facing operators like Turner.

“What are the goals we want? We don’t want to set victims up for failure. The victim has final say,” she said.

Turner’s coworker hangs up the phone, those two beds have been filled by a mother and child. 142 people are safe from their domestic abusers, but thousands will have to explore other options to stay safe.
What does Allison French, a social worker in Chicago’s Englewood neighborhood, think the most common intrapersonal crime in Chicago is?

“Domestic violence,” she answered, with no hesitation.

Headlines about Chicago’s violence often emphasize body counts, victims, and speculation about the perpetrators and motives. These stories give readers a strong visual connection to the crimes.

One in four women will be domestically abused within their lifetimes, according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and domestic violence claims 1,200 lives a year in the United States. This issue is often viewed by victims and bystanders as a private matter, but at victim-centric organizations, the focus is on giving victims a voice in the public sphere.
Counseling is one such organization. Home life for thousands of Chicago families. Avance Counseling is one such organization.

Located on a street corner in Lincoln Square between doctors’ offices and acupuncture clinics, Avance is where domestic violence offenders begin the process of facing their actions. Inside, it looks like any doctor’s office, full of stacks of paperwork, file cabinets, and people bustling in and out. But its practice is re-education.

Dr. Jorge Argueta is the director at Avance and has worked with domestic violence offenders since 1998. His clients are typically males who have committed some form of physical violence against an intimate partner, as well as possible offenses in one or more of the other three categories of domestic violence defined by Avance: sexual, emotional, and economic.

Argueta is only the second director of the northside counseling center and is well-versed in the behavior and mentality of the offenders that walk through his doors. His clients can come voluntarily, but the majority come from social services, or through court-mandated probation. Clients pay a service fee, which adjusts to reflect income, while the remaining funding comes from Cook County. After a preliminary intake interview to determine the main offense, the majority of clients are enrolled in the Partner Abuse Intervention Program (PAIP).

PAIP is a 24-26 week course that “focuses on psycho-educating domestic violence offenders with a priority on accountability, and victim safety,” Argueta said. Offenders are required to complete the course if it has been mandated by the government, and many undergo counseling as part of their probation to regain custody of their children. The counseling takes place in weekly small group meetings with pre-approved curricula that differ from center to center, but generally focuses less on the traditional book-work approach and more on a feminist perspective of equality.

This approach shuns the common justification for domestic violence: that offenders are a product of their environment.

“We evaluate the clients’ progress when they don’t use objectifications, don’t have misogynistic attitudes, when they understand women’s emotions in terms of accepting and validating their partner’s feelings,” Argueta explains.

While emotions like anger, frustration, and anxiety are common, these offenders have reacted by using violence. Avance helps them understand that life brings obstacles that create emotions, but reacting to these emotions with violence is not their only option.

Offenders in the PAIP program must attend at least 23 meetings, take full ownership of their actions, and show remorse and willingness to change their behavior. Monthly progress reports are sent to probation officers and case workers to encourage growth from all sides. Once an offender leaves the program, counselors have the option to contact victims if they feel there are any remaining safety concerns.

Argueta hopes to expand the types of services Avance offers in the future, particularly in counseling for women. He feels there is a lack of clarity in cases with females when determining the victim and offender. Often he comes across female offenders who are actually victims acting in self-defense.

There is limited research and curriculum focused on helping females as both victims and offenders at Avance. Argueta hopes that with future study and focus, women will receive tailored counseling treatment for domestic violence based on their perspective.

Avance is an education-focused organization. Much of what it teaches focuses on respect for beliefs, other people’s emotions, and the role each person plays in their family and community. This is what truly lies at the core of domestic violence issues: the abuser feels they have lost control of a situation and need to regain it through physical violence. Argueta believes one of the biggest changes Avance can make is in the offenders’ mindset.

“We teach [domestic violence offenders] positive masculine attitudes, not those that involve power, control, violence, and male privilege,” he explained. “We need to teach them the concept of masculinity from a positive point of view.”
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