
The Huge Problem Of Violence In Chicago

When asked the first word people associate with crime, regularly the word that comes up is violence. Recently the majority of the population are under the impression that violent crimes are committed more often than they actually are, and that crime rates are increasing. This assumption is made from the simple fact that society draws their ideas from heuristics that are formed from everyday interactions. By forming these ideologies simply off heuristics, it blocks the chance to flesh out the true cause of the problem and correctly examine the issue to come to an accurate conclusion. Which very well be at the cause of our own hands. For example, the beautiful city of Chicago. Chicago has recently become the headlining act for crime as well as violence. But is Chicago a dangerous city in itself or has it become the kids that we raised? Or was there a domino effect of events that caused it to be the spokesmen for violence?

Chicago was originally founded by a freed haitian man, Jean Baptiste Point du Sable. Chicago was originally situated to take advantage of the trading opportunities created by the Nation's westward expansion. Over time Chicago would bloom into an influential metropolitan area. Mark Twain had wrote "It is hopeless for the occasional visitor to try to keep up with Chicago. She outgrows his prophecies faster than he can make them.", Chicago's population would grow immensely over the next few years. After World War I, there was an influx of African-American migrants from the south that would come into Chicago. The lively atmosphere would soon appeal to other migrants. With this wave of newcomers tensions grew between the already established Irish, Polish and German ethnic groups. So much so that there were a string of bombings of homes occupied by the new African-American members and a race riot.

Following these incidents, by 1930 Chicago's population reached 3 million. Chicago was on a rise economically and culturally.

Between 1950 and 1960 the population shrunk for the first time in Chicago's history. Factory jobs were leveling off and white people began moving to the suburbs. Originally the vast majority of the southside of Chicago was occupied by the African American population, but then affluent white and European families pushed outward from the central city and moved south. This caused the unmobile African Americans in the central city to be stagnant and the already settled African American "Southsiders" to be displaced. In the 19th century there was a residential segregation implemented, white residents would expand out taking up most of the southside and causing the African American Southsiders to be confined to a narrow strip of the southside. Due to population pressures black families would start moving more south and east to find welcoming land. As the blacks moved closer to the south land of the white neighborhoods, the 'white flight' would begin again as the white families moved West. Soon the Westside would be labeled the predominantly white ethnic working-class neighborhood and the south would revert back to the primarily black neighborhood. While, the westside was reinventing itself with jobs, families, and manufacturing, the southside and central city were suffering. Instead of trying to pour more employment and resources into the poor neighborhoods, they were razed and replaced with massive public housing, leaving minorities with lack of income and available opportunities.

How did the lack of employment and resources add to the act of violence within budgeted

neighbourhoods? The answer is having excessive amounts of free time. Youth tend to turn to crime in the absence of useful activities and parental guidance, while especially the youth of Chicago are open to this near the end of the academic year. According to the article it was found that most shootings took place during the summer months. Of the victims listed most of the victims were under the age of 25, and even more under the age of 21.

How do these correlate? Based on society's idea of norms, those under the age of 21 should be present in school during most of the months throughout the years, which could be a reasoning as to why there is a spark of violence or crime during the summer months. Also, with the lack of employment, extracurricular activities, or resources in general there becomes a sense of for a lack of a better word, boredom. When you have nowhere to attend daily such as school, a job, or have the need to complete strenuous tasks, one may sink into a state of hopelessness and resort to crime.

What can be done? Best explained by the Chicago Tribune article 'Chicago needs a war on poverty to stop the violence'. Speaking of the high crime section of Chicago, the southside. Between 40 and 60% of the residents are either low income or poverty stricken. Most lawmakers focus on the war on crime but approach it with a short term conclusion instead of coming up with a long term resolution that includes eliminating inequality and creating a pathway to opportunity. There needs to be some incorporation of job trainings and programs to allow those that are unemployed or struggling have some available means of bettering themselves. An approach to resolving this issue would getting youth and young adults involved in afterschool programs and transitory classes.

Afterschoolalliance.org states that "afterschool programs are helping children and families across the country by providing academic enrichment, keeping young people active, serving nutritious food, and giving working parents peace of mind about their child and much more." For parents living in communities of concentrated poverty, afterschool programs are also helping services that other families may take for granted, such as a safe environment and nutritious foods". Another approach is bringing in anti-violence programs that may be beneficial as it can better demonstrate to those how the formation of gangs and acts of crime will hurt the community more than better it. Families in Chicago will benefit of programs like these because it will ensure that kids are getting helped developmentally by creating a space to practice social skills, teamwork skills, and learn the art of critical thinking. These programs give parents a piece of mind knowing that their kids aren't on the streets but they also are in an enriching environment where they can gain a sense of morality in participating in programs like such. These are steps that can be made in the right direction to help better the community, not so much in the gentrification of building and land but in rejuvenating the citizens of the lackluster communities and allowing them the same accessibility to resources of those in affluent communities. Using this route will help us take the first step in understanding the root of the issue and taking the correct action to fix it.

A big issue in all violence stricken neighborhoods is the basic idea of the war on poverty. Violence will continue in Chicago and many other low income communities until we take the focus off of the unfolding events and start focusing on the youth within struggling neighborhoods. Until legitimate means are at the very least reasonably accessible to those truly in need of them, there will be a strain community causing the cycle of violence to continue.