

YOUTHS, from page 4

Q: What do you guys think when you see this portrayal of gang violence in the media? What kind of conversation happens in your homes around this issue?

Black: Honestly, sometimes I wonder if it's actually a gang shooting. I might just not like you and decide to shoot you, but since we're both black, they're going to assume that it was a gang shooting.

Hartley: Definitely. You know, me and my family, we talk about this stuff all the time, and it's like it doesn't even matter if both people in the parties are African-American, as soon as there's a POC, as people like to call us, a "person of color," in any type of altercation – it doesn't even have to be a shooting – they're going to say it is possibly gang related. Even if they don't know, they're going to throw that "maybe it might be gang related" because of the race of the person. I know for a fact that every shooting that happens is not gang related, and it's just sad that even though I've seen Caucasian people shoot other people, the "maybe" isn't even in there.

Q: In Portland, what are the root problems contributing to a lot of black youths joining gangs?

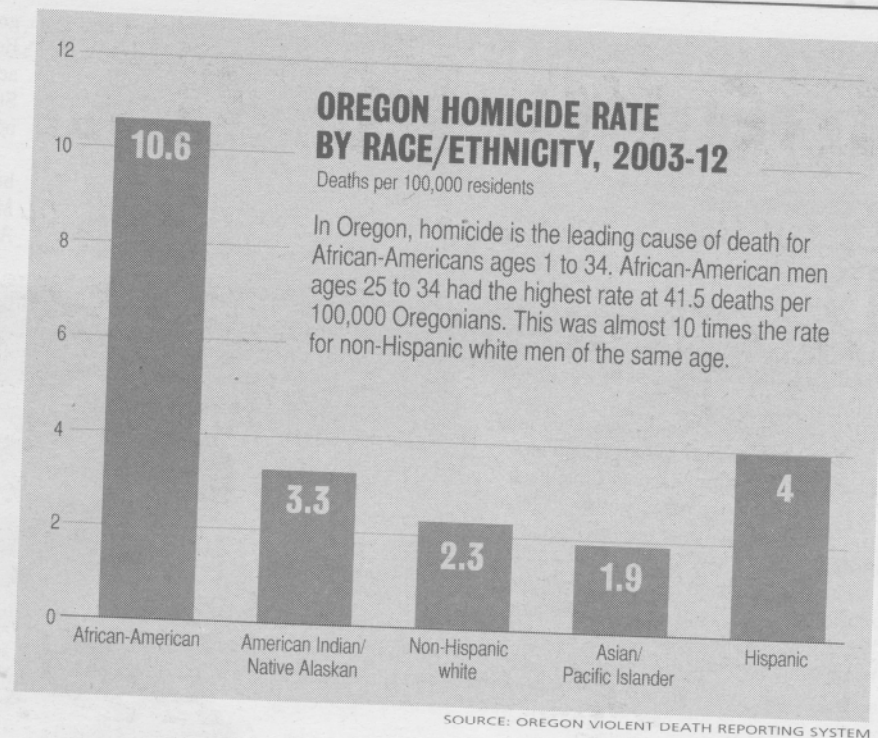
Hartley: Unstable homes, off the top – definitely. With the Community Center Initiative that the mayor's office just started, we're just now getting youth into places, but there's not enough opportunities for young black men and every other ethnicity to be spending their time positively instead of out kickin' it with friends and things like that. I guess we should buckle down the access to everything negative.

Q: What's causing the violence in the first place?

Wilandrae McCall, 18: It's like a game of chess. You got your pawns, you got your king, your queen, and then basically this pawn is trying to make it to the other side 'cause they see – you got blacks on one side, you got whites on one side in the chess game, right? You got the black side trying to make it over to – not all pieces do stuff, but a pawn, if you make it to the other side, you're a queen now, so you can do everything that a queen can do. So it's like if you're in the hood, and you see somebody else doing better, you're going to want to do better, so you're going to try and move up another spot, and whatever it is, it's survival of the fittest. You basically want to be better than whoever else.

Hartley: I would say a lack of stability meaning maybe one parent, maybe no parents, maybe two parents and neither of them care. The youth, they don't feel like they belong to anything, they don't have a sense of belonging, so then they find people who claim that, "Oh, you know, if you come and join my hood, then you'll have this certain level of respect, you'll have this you'll have that," and then they cling to that because then they feel like they belong to something, they are someone, they mean something.

I think our African-American population here, they feel alone. We're attacked just for



walking down the street. We're attacked for being black, by our police, the people that are supposed to protect us, even the media. We don't get really any good media coverage, so we feel like we have to fend for ourselves and do things on our own.

Q: Do you think gentrification has played a role in the increase in violence?

McCall: I've lived in the same neighborhood most my life; Peninsula, Rosa Parks area – so it used to be there were a few black people on the block, and now, there's this main strip where all you see is white people now, but if you go a couple blocks back, you start to see, oh there's a bunch of black people cluttered in Section 8 homes, low-income housing. You'll notice, in the gentrified neighborhoods, the violence is usually close to somewhere where there's Section 8 living, like, behind Jefferson there's Section 8, behind the other side of PCC there's Section 8. They're putting black people together to basically make them fight against each other, I guess.

Hartley: I think gentrification is a way to shift the area of violence, because I know North, Northeast, there used to be a certain amount – or a higher level – of violence, and now that rent prices are going up, everything is going up. And out in, say, East Portland and Southeast Portland, all the way from about 102nd and Burnside to Gresham, rent's not necessarily going down, rent's a lot lower, everybody's being moved out there because they can't pay rent, and all the violence is shifting out there, and I feel like – yeah – gentrification is a way to shift that violence away from the community they are trying to reclaim.



"We say people need all these civil liberties: I can't just kill you, I can't just search you, I can't make you work for free, but as soon as one of you guys gets incarcerated? Death penalty; I can make you work for slave wages."

WESLEY BLACK, 21

McCall: They're basically neglecting what needs to be done, so until something is done, that family is just going to put up with it. "Oh, we're not putting any money in, but we're going to raise your rent so you gotta move." If you're not putting any money in that community – like I lived at a house for four or five years; not one improvement was done. We moved out, they tore it down, built a new house – that definitely shows a lot. I think white people own that house now.

Q: Is there a hesitance to call the police among members of your community, and do you think that fuels violence in some situations?

Hartley: I've lived that situation. It depends on the neighborhood; it depends on the neighbors. People know if certain things happen, nobody's going to call the police, and oftentimes, it does escalate, and I blame the police. I would say, yes, it does have an effect.

McCall: It's school season now; it's sports. This is a time when gang members are out usually in the neighborhoods, so the police do what they call a sweep. They come through and they search only

black kids – well from what I've seen, only black kids – for weapons. They do a pat-down; they don't go in your pockets or anything, but they say it's a mandatory search they can do this time of year and they're looking for guns. Last year, I'd just left a Jefferson (High School) game and was walking home, and a cop pulls me over, tells me he needs to search me 'cause I look suspicious or something. I'm like, "No, I'm refusing a search at this point," and he's like, "Well you can't really do that; you're not of age." And I'm like, "Well, that seems wrong," and he's like, "It's like a routine search; just go with it." When they go into communities, they build that into people's

heads, like, "Oh they're just going to do this," or, "Just let them do this and get away with it," rather than parents sticking up for their children or people nearby sticking up for the victim.

Street Roots asked Portland Police Bureau whether a person can refuse a pat-down such as the one described. Sgt. Greg Stewart, a police spokesman, said an officer must have "an articulable reason" for suspecting the person has weapons and cannot subject them to a pat-down simply for being in a particular area.

"Juveniles can refuse a consent search," he said, "but as long as an officer has reasonable suspicion, they can pat a person down for weapons. We do not use this very often."

He said Portland police stopped 99 pedestrians during the past quarter.

Q: During the roundtable discussion, someone mentioned how differently he was treated going to the mall wearing a hoodie versus wearing a suit. Have any of you experienced that form of racism here in Portland?

Hartley: Yep. I swear to you, me, my brother and two of my girl cousins had just got to the Lloyd Center mall. We walked in through Macy's, a security guard met us and said, "You have to leave." We asked why. "There was just a group of African-Americans walking through the mall, and we think they were going to fight, and you guys look like you were part of the group." Things like that – walking around, maybe just window shopping or looking at things before I buy them, people walk up, "Oh, well do you need help?" No. I know what I'm looking for. Or you start seeing the same security guard following you, start leaning on the rails, then you see them and they try to go to the other side of the mall but they're still following you. That happens consistently.

Q: Does it matter what you're wearing?

Hartley: I know officers approach me differently or talk to me differently depending on how I'm dressed. And they don't know I work for the mayor. I've been in my street clothes – I wear Nike boots, Levi 501 stiff jeans, and a jacket, graphic tee or cardigan – and it actually hurts my feelings to a certain extent, but I'm not that much of an emotional person because it's like, how come my clothes change the way you look at me? I dress like this every day damn near (he said as he motioned toward the clothing he wore: gray slacks and a baby-blue tucked-in button-up shirt). And yet on the weekend, I look like a gang member because I change clothes.

Davis: Same for me. In Alberta area, it's like the most gentrified place in America, and over there, for my job, they stress that we have to be professional, because all the guys at my job are young black men, so we have to wear white shirts and slacks. One day after work, I had something later, so I changed into sweatpants and like a graphic shirt. Before, I could walk down the street and I'd say hi to people and people would recognize me, but over there, dressing casual, people like avoid me. And some