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Crime Prevention Unit Names Coordinator

The appointment of Dennis G. Payne as coordinator of Portland's street crime prevention program has been announced by City Commissioner Dick Bogle.

Payne, 39, will work within the city's Office of Neighborhood Associations (ONA), under a second-year block grant from the Oregon Department of Justice.

Bogle, the city's Commissioner of Public Safety, said the grant to ONA is the city's only Justice Assistance Block Grant to be funded for a second year.

"This means the program is working," Bogle stated. "It's a real feather in ONA's cap."

Payne said his immediate goal is to help people organize their neighborhoods to fight all types of street crime. His long-term goal is to help restore livability to areas seriously impacted by crime.

As a result of last year's grant, ONA developed and distributed a drug house reporting form. The "Drug House Abatement Ordinance," enacted by City Council on May 7, is another product of the grant.

As part of his duties over the next year, Payne will work with residents of neighborhoods hit hardest by the drug house problem. He will assist citizens in passing information about drug houses and dealers to the Portland Police.

He also will work with people seeking a solution to the problem of street prostitution.

Payne was born in Hubbard and raised in Portland, attending Eliot Elementary School and Benson High School. After gra-



Dennis G. Payne

duating from Portland State University, he earned a master's degree in community service and public administration from the University of Oregon's Division of Continuing Education.

Payne's professional background includes working for the Albina Multi-Service Center, and for the Oregon Executive Department under the late Gov. Tom McCall.

He also served as executive director of the Martin Luther King Foundation in Oregon.

Prior to accepting his new appointment, he was a member of the Metropolitan Youth Commission for two years. He also served, for the past two years, on city budget advisory committees.

Payne said his work for the Youth Commission has given him a special interest in steering young people away from crime.

"When young people say they have nothing to do, what they need is information on all the activities open to them," he explained. "And if they don't respond to the information, what they need is a gently nudge, to get them motivated."

Payne sees one of his roles as acting to minimize the impact of budget cuts in the Police Bureau's Juvenile Services Division, and the "Officer Friendly" education program in the schools.

He and his wife, Louise, a receptionist for Mayor Bud Clark, have three children. Bobette, 20, is a sophomore at Spellman College in Atlanta; Dennis II, 18, is a junior at Grant High School and Corey, 8, is a second grader at Madeleine School.

Violent Deaths Strike African Americans at Alarming Rate

by Jerry Garner

The brutal murders of 17-year-old Gilbert Venard Myles and 16-year-old Frankie L. Henderson are part of a disturbing trend that is occurring nationwide. That is, Black-on-Black murder.

Myles was brutally murdered by another Black youth, 16-year-old Jerry Sandles, before some 50 students at Grant High School. Henderson was stabbed to death last Saturday by Wesley G. Gray, an 18-year-old who was charged in connection with Henderson's death.

Currently, intraracial homicide is the leading cause of death of African American males 15 to 44, and it is estimated that homicide may be responsible for one-third of all the causes of death of Black males in this age range.

African American males are at risk of being murdered ten times more than white males; Black females are five times more likely to be murdered than white females. Nearly a third of female homicide victims are killed by their husbands or boyfriends.

The Grant High shooting illustrates another disturbing pattern to Black-on-Black murder—that is—the high number of killings among Black youths.

Nationwide, in such large cities as Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, there has been a wave of murders committed by Black youths on one another. Of all of the above cities mentioned, none have experienced more killings than Detroit. Last year, 43 children younger than 17 were killed. On the average, a child was shot every day in that city. So far this year, 102 Detroit youths age 16 or younger have been shot; 10 of them died from their wounds. In an effort to address the issue, Detroit officials have begun placing metal detectors in inner-city schools, in hopes of preventing students from bringing weapons into classrooms.

Those who study the phenomenon of Black-on-Black murder give different views on its causation. Some argue that the high rate of intraracial killing among African Americans can be explained by the "subculture of violence" theory and through the "psychiatric disorder" theory.

The subculture of violence theory states that the "urban ghetto environment produces a type of murderer that is characteristically a young, African American, lower class male who is quick to respond to narcissistic injury with lethal aggressive intent." This type of individual was felt to be predisposed to using aggression as a means to an end, and criminal violence to obtain material goods which would ordinarily be out of his reach. Proponents of this theory believe this type of murderer etiology is in a sub-cultural and social environment that encourages physical aggression.

The psychiatric disorder theory attributes Black-on-Black violence in part to the high incidence of coma in the Black population. A recent study on Black psychiatric patients in Chicago, at the Community Mental Health Council, reveals that 45 percent of the 108 subjects reported having had at least one episode of coma. Other studies have shown a relation between head injuries, neuropsychiatric impairment, and coma to be subsequent episodes of homicidal aggression or suicidal behavior.

Although both theories give an explanation for Black-on-Black violence, they are questionable. Critics of the subculture of violence theory argue that it's questionable and leads to inappropriate rationalizations for murder; thereby discouraging further research and hindering the development of intervention strategies.

The question of whether mentally ill patients are more predisposed to violence is hotly debated, with one side asserting that murderers who are psychotic are rare.

"The answer to this problem is very complex. It's very difficult to point to just one single cause to explain the high rate of homicide amongst African Americans," said Dr. Oiodi T. Osuji.

Dr. Osuji, a mental health worker at the North/Northeast Community Mental Health Center, said frustration among a high percentage of Blacks regarding their low status in society contributes to Black-on-Black violence. "Blacks are a minority in the United States. We are basically powerless and subjugated people. These conditions tend to lead one to become frustrated."

He said human beings like to feel in control of their own environment, like to participate in the governing of society, and to share the wealth. Dr. Osuji said, "This gives individuals a sense of self-worth in that they are contributing to the well-being of that society. For many African Americans, this is not the case. American society has consciously constructed an environment in which Blacks begin to think of themselves as outsiders and not part of mainstream America. Consequently, African Americans feel discriminated against, powerless, and many feel angry."

Dr. Osuji said instead of directing this anger at the establishment which caused this sense of powerlessness, many Blacks and other ethnic minorities vent their anger at each other. He calls this phenomenon "displacement of anger."

Dr. Osuji's displacement theory may explain the rise in incidence of youth murders among African Americans. Many Black youths place little value on human life. It has been reported that as Myles laid mortally wounded on the school courtyard, his attacker calmly shot him several more times in the head as a group of horrified students watched. Such murders occur frequently when young Black males and adults settle arguments. According to published reports, the Myles/Sandles feud was over a cap.

Another reason cited for the high incidence of intraracial homicide among Blacks is the low value placed on their lives in the United States. A clear example of this can be seen in the recent 5-4 decision by the United States Supreme Court stating that it's constitutional for states to discriminate against African Americans when applying the death penalty.

The case, brought before the high court by the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc. on the behalf of a condemned Black Georgia murderer, argued that statistical data showed that Blacks who kill whites in Georgia are nearly 11 times more likely to receive the death penalty than those who kill blacks. Blacks who killed whites were sentenced to die three times more often than whites who killed whites.

The consequences of Black-on-Black murder in Black communities around the nation is disturbing. The killing reduces the presence of Black males in the community. This contributes to the high incidence of Black female head-of-households.

Dr. Osuji said if Black-on-Black violence is to be reduced, society must first begin to address the high rate of poverty among African Americans. He said poverty "influences values and attitudes about the worth of human life."

Smoke Detectors Are Not Enough

When police in Northvale, N.J., investigated the fire death of a 19-year-old woman last October, they learned that a smoke detector outside her bedroom failed to sound the alarm that could have saved her life.

Investigators found that the detector's batteries were dead.

Noting similar tragedies every year, the Dictograph Security Information Bureau warns that total reliance on single station smoke detectors is dangerous.

"Smoke detectors are an invaluable life safety tool, but they are no substitute for diligence," said bureau spokesman Michael E. Horne. "Homeowners should continue to rely on themselves by planning and practicing escape routes and learning other methods of preventing and escaping fire."

The bureau, located in Florham Park, N.J., points to statistics to show that the nation's rising fire death rate could be improved. Although a 1985 Lou Harris poll indicates that nearly 75 percent of all American homes are equipped with smoke detectors, additional studies suggest that nearly one-third of them do not work because of dead batteries or faulty detection mechanisms.

"Frequently, homeowners do not use enough detectors, and too often, they are rendered useless because they are improperly placed," said Horne.

He added that residential fire safety is an especially important concern in 1987 following the National Fire Protection Association's announcement late last year that home fire deaths rose 19.8 percent in 1985, the first rise in the nation's fire death toll since 1981. A total of 4,885 people were killed in residential fires and property damage rose 9.2 percent to \$7.3 billion.

"A house fire occurs every 57 seconds," observed Horne. The bureau also suggests that families conduct monthly fire drills in addition to installing smoke detectors outside each separate living area and regularly changing batteries and testing equipment.

"Escape routes and alternate escape routes should be planned and faithfully practiced once a month, so that all family members—even babysitters—are familiar with them," said Horne. "A rendezvous point outside the home also must be established so that all members of the household can be accounted for."

Horne suggested any convenient, easily-remembered location—a street light, a tree or a spot in front of a neighbor's house.

"Many people are killed going back into a burning home trying to rescue someone who's already gotten out," he said.

More complete information about family fire protection is explained in the bureau's illustrated booklet, "Prepare your family's escape plan." A free copy may be obtained by writing to the bureau at Dictograph, Dept. 204, 26 Columbia Turnpike, Florham Park, N.J. 07932.

The Dictograph Security Information Bureau is a special service of Dictograph Security Systems of Florham Park, N.J., one of the nation's oldest and largest fire and burglar alarm firms.