



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

GUN VIOLENCE IN PUBLIC HOUSING – A SMALL SAMPLE FROM 1998 AND 1999

Gun violence in public housing developments across the country has become an all-too-common tragedy. A search of newspaper articles over the years turns up thousands of stories about people who have been killed, people who have been wounded, and families living in fear. Here are brief summaries of just a small sample of news stories published in 1998 and 1999 about shootings in public housing in 15 states and the District of Columbia.

ALABAMA

MONTGOMERY – Police statistics show that 16 percent of the city's 32 homicides in 1998 occurred in public housing. In addition, about 12 percent of the city's aggravated assaults in 1998 were reported in public housing projects.

CALIFORNIA

RICHMOND – July 22, 1999 – Gaston Avila, 19, of Richmond was shot to death and three others – including a 15-year-old girl who was nine months pregnant – were shot during a birthday party at the Easter Hill public housing complex.

SAN FRANCISCO – March 31, 1998 – A 27-year-old man was shot to death execution-style in the Sunnydale public housing development. The neighborhood has experienced gun violence in the past. In November, Charles Adams, a 60-year-old retiree, was killed by a stray bullet from a shoot-out between two young men.

SAN FRANCISCO – May 20, 1999 – Mayor Willie Brown wrote a letter to HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo saying that the San Francisco Housing Authority is running out of money to pay for private guards and needs \$7 million from the federal government to keep crime, vandalism and gangs at bay. In a July 12 letter to HUD, Senators Feinstein and Boxer make the same plea.

CONNECTICUT

BRIDGEPORT – February 1, 1999 – The body of Delmar Epps, 23, was found lying in the road near the Green Homes public housing development, with multiple gunshot wounds.

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

WASHINGTON -- October 21, 1998 -- A 4-year-old girl named Javina Holmes, a resident of the Frederick Douglass Dwellings public housing development, was killed when her 8-year-old brother found a loaded shotgun inside their apartment and began shooting.

WASHINGTON -- June 21, 1999 -- A 55-year-old grandmother, Helen Foster-El, was gunned down by two stray bullets fired by a group of feuding young men as she tried to usher neighborhood children to safety. Parents in the East Capitol Dwellings public housing development said they give their children survival instructions on what to do when shooting erupts, because it happens so often.

FLORIDA

CLEARWATER -- May 20, 1999 -- LaShonda Denise Williams, 19, was accidentally shot in her Jasmine Court public housing apartment when a revolver that she and her boyfriend were looking at went off. The bullet passed through Williams' neck and came out her shoulder.

MIAMI -- July 15, 1999 -- A resident of the James E. Scott Homes, the largest public housing development in Florida, recounted the story of a boy who was shot by two men driving by in a car while the boy was buying ice cream. The man said that another time he was sitting on his porch when he saw a boy being chased and shot.

TAMPA -- April 1, 1998 -- One man was killed and two others were critically wounded during a shootout in the Riverview Terrace public housing development. The dead man was found on a sidewalk and two wounded men were in a car stopped near the scene. Police said the incident initially appeared to be a drug deal gone bad, since drugs and guns were found in the car. The slaying was the third homicide in three weeks and the second in two days at Riverview Terrace.

ILLINOIS

CHICAGO -- January 19, 1998 -- Parents and other residents will begin escorting children to school January 20 with the hope of protecting them from gang gunfire in the Cabrini-Green public housing development. The escorts attended a training session to prepare them on what to do if gunfire erupts.

CHICAGO -- September 7, 1998 -- Lavell Jones, 22, was shot and killed by a Chicago Housing Authority policeman after threatening the officer with a 9-mm. handgun. Police were responding to reports of a shooting at the Robert Taylor Homes public housing development when the incident occurred.

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KENTUCKY

LOUISVILLE -- May 3, 1999 -- Suspected gang member Corey J. Bell, 25, was shot to death in an apparent drug dispute at the Clarksdale public housing development. The suspect in the shooting, Ricky LaSalle Glass, 22, shot in himself in the head on May 4, 1999, after a four-hour standoff with Louisville police. Glass died later in the day.

LOUISIANA

NEW ORLEANS -- May 3, 1998 -- A mother of seven children, Melissa Stone, was on her way to Jazzfest when she was abducted at gunpoint, raped, shot and left to die in an abandoned apartment in the Desire public housing development. Her body was found several days later. A New Orleans man with no adult criminal record was convicted of manslaughter.

NEW ORLEANS -- May 8, 1998 -- Theron Corey, 29, was gunned down in the Guste public housing complex. One of two men who shot him was described by prosecutors as a "hit man," and was later convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison.

NEW ORLEANS -- March 18, 1999 -- Sean Jackson, 24, has been charged with two murders that occurred in the C.J. Peete public housing development. Demetrice Harper, 19, was robbed and killed on December 19 in a driveway. Jeremy Nunnery, 23, was shot to death on January 5 after a fight.

MARYLAND

ANNAPOLIS -- April 12, 1999 -- Bryon Antoine Jones, 22, was fatally shot near the front stoop of his girlfriend's Annapolis Gardens duplex. The shooting at the public housing community was apparently the result of an earlier altercation at Club Hollywood, a nearby nightclub.

MASSACHUSETTS

WORCESTER -- March 27, 1998 -- Luis A. Torres, 24, was shot in both legs while walking along a street in the Great Brook Valley public housing project. After being treated at University of Massachusetts Hospital, Torres was arrested on criminal warrants. Police say the shooting by five assailants wearing ski masks coincides with the assumed arrival in the neighborhood of a cache of stolen handguns.

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NEW JERSEY

NEWARK – January 9, 1999 – Newark Police Officer Frederick Johnson was shot and wounded and Douglas Lamont Parker was killed in a shootout during a routine drug arrest in the Stella Wright Homes public housing development. While the officer was preparing to arrest several men during a drug deal, police said Parker burst through a back door and began firing.

PATERSON – June 24, 1999 – Benjamin Reyes, 26, was shot in the back in his car by an unknown assailant at the Alexander Hamilton public housing complex. The shooter fired at least seven rounds into the vehicle, with four bullets piercing the rear window. Reyes and a companion in the car were later charged with possession and distribution of heroin.

NEW YORK

NEW YORK CITY – August 1, 1999 – Gerard Carter, a 28-year-old New York City police officer, died four days after being shot outside a building in the West Brighton Homes, a public housing development on Staten Island. The alleged gunman was Shatiek Johnson, 17. Carter and his partner were attempting to arrest Johnson on charges of shooting a 20-year-old man in July. Johnson was on parole for beating a homeless person to death two years earlier.

SCHENECTADY – June 20, 1999 – As children played nearby, 21-year-old Shawn Stevens was shot twice in the abdomen at a playground courtyard at the Steinmetz Homes public housing development.

NORTH CAROLINA

ASHEVILLE – June 2, 1999 – A 17-year-old youth died after he was shot at Deaverview Apartments, a public housing development. The suspect is a 16-year-old boy.

DURHAM – April 7, 1998 – While walking home from dinner with his mother, a five-year-old boy was hit by a stray bullet from a gunfight. The bullet severed his spine, and Taquan Mikell may never walk again. The bullet struck him more than a half block away from the gunfight, near a park where as many as 100 children play every day.

PENNSYLVANIA

BETHELEM – July 7, 1998 – Police said Julio Hernandez, 39, shot and killed William Lopez, 21, at the Pembroke Village public housing development. The killing took place shortly after Lopez shot and critically wounded Anthony Feliciano, 23, after an early-morning argument.

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EASTON – June 16, 1998 – A New York City man was shot in the leg at the Delaware Terrace public housing project in Easton. The alleged assailant, Troy Alvin, 19, was also arrested in another shooting at a Stroudsburg restaurant and bar that injured two bystanders. At the time of the restaurant shooting, Alvin was awaiting trial for the shooting of the New York City man.

MOUNT PLEASANT – October 10, 1998 – A 46-year-old man broke into a neighbor's apartment at the Pleasant Manor public housing development. He shot and killed 9-year-old Jeremy Barnhart and critically wounded the boy's 14-year-old sister, Cori Barnhart. The gunman, Alan Waterhouse, then returned to his own apartment and, after barricading himself inside for 12 hours, killed himself. Waterhouse was the former boyfriend of the children's mother.

TENNESSEE

MEMPHIS – June, 1999 – Two recent shootings of children at Fowler Homes public housing have increased public pressure for better protection, including a proposal to hire private security guards. In the past year, four homicides, 62 assaults, 133 burglaries and other crimes have taken place at Memphis Housing Authority developments, according to the agency.

NASHVILLE – July 2, 1999 – Nashville teenager, Eric Harvey Hazelitt, was fatally shot in the chest when gunfire erupted at the John Henry Hale public housing complex in Nashville. Just 14-years-old, Hazelitt was often seen riding his bike, helping older neighbors shop or emptying the trash. Witnesses said Hazelitt got caught in the crossfire of two groups shooting at each other.

VIRGINIA

PORTSMOUTH – July 10, 1999 – Linwood Scott killed a 28-year-old woman and himself, ending a 13-hour standoff with police at the Jeffrey Wilson Homes public housing development. The woman, Rene Childers, was one of four hostages held by Scott.

RICHMOND -- April 28, 1999 – A man was shot to death in the Creighton Court public housing development. A suspect was taken into custody shortly after the incident.

RICHMOND – July 23, 1999 – A woman was shot in the head and killed at the Gilpin Court public housing development while standing next to a pay telephone.

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