

ANOTHER SHOOTING HURTS TWO VICTIMS - BULLET ALMOST TAKES A YOUNG MAN'S FUTURE AND WOUNDS CITY'S RECOVERY

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The call came right after dinner. My friend Carol, whose voice always sounds like Sunday church and butter biscuits, was flustered.

The mother in me competed with the reporter in me, and I couldn't ask questions fast enough: "What's wrong? Where are you? What's happened?"

"Christopher's been shot."

At his open house three weeks ago, her self-assured, taller-than-he-was-the-last-time-I-saw-him, oldest son Christopher was a gracious 18-year-old high school graduate, working the room and greeting guests.

Three weeks later, on his way home from the State Fair Wednesday night, Christopher stopped at the BP gas station at Eight Mile and Gratiot about 9:30 p.m. to get something to drink. Three teens who had passed his car as he was pulling in, doubled back, drew guns and said, "Give us everything you have right now."

Christopher pulled his pants pocket inside out so they could see that it was empty. They then asked for his car keys. And Christopher did something his parents had taught him not to. He begged the thugs not to take the 1998 Buick Regal his parents bought him last June to get to his classes at Wayne State.

"I really need my car," he told them. "I said, 'Please don't do this.' And they kept saying, 'Are you trying to get popped?'"

He finally gave them the keys, and one kid fired a round anyway. And my friend's son became one of three people shot in Detroit last Wednesday night and among the 1,254 shot so far this year (as of Tuesday afternoon).

An ambulance took Christopher to St. John's, where he was treated for a hip wound, and waited until he was stable to call his parents.

"I didn't want them to flip out," he said. "I wanted them to be safe."

Oh, how I hated that his mother, an angel who sews costumes and carpools children and has raised three boys without incident in Detroit, had to hear her baby say, "I've been shot."

Meanwhile, back at the gas station, the shot must have startled even the thugs, who all wore black button-up shirts and black Dickies. They ran, leaving the car behind.

"I hear about this kind of stuff on TV all the time, and it's just stupid and insensitive and makes me irritated and annoyed and disgusted," Christopher said later as he recuperated at home. "Now that it's happened to me, it makes me feel that way even more. And I really don't want to be here (in Detroit) anymore. I know the same thing could happen in other places, but this happened here."

Christopher and his brothers are talented singers and actors. They don't belong to gangs. They attend church every Sunday. They say "Yes ma'am" and "Yes sir" when responding to questions, and they open doors for their mother's friends.

This column could have been an obituary. I thank God it isn't, but why does it take the obituaries of good kids for us to act? We need to begin a revolution to save the kids who do everything right but are harmed by everything wrong in Detroit.

Christopher would have begun his freshman year Tuesday at Wayne State. But a local school wasn't his first choice.

"I wanted to be out of Michigan," he said. "I wanted to do something different, go somewhere else, experience something else."

His parents think it's time for their family to have different experiences, too. They have stayed in Detroit, not from loyalty, but because they, like many city dwellers, are stuck with a house they would have to abandon.

"I know it can happen anywhere," said Charles, Christopher's 50-year-old father, a mailman. "But I'm ready to get out."

If Detroit cannot make itself safe enough for young men like Christopher and his brothers, the luxury condos on the Detroit River won't matter, and we won't care that we have a hometown team in the World Series in October.

If Detroit pulls itself up without ridding itself of the gangrene of thugs and punks who get money and cars by stealing them, the city will not be healthy.

So if anyone knows the trio of teenagers dressed in all black who almost stole a car and who took **another** shot at Detroit last Wednesday, call the police and turn them in. You won't be just solving a crime; you'll be helping to save a city.

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