

## CHICAGO REACHES OUT TO RAPE VICTIM , 9

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**CHICAGO** -- Her name is a secret, guarded as closely as the **9** -year-old herself. Raped, choked, poisoned and dumped in a stairwell, Girl X has been unconscious for a month, unable **to** describe her attacker.

As police follow the clues -- which include gang-style graffiti scrawled on her body -- the child has been embraced by **Chicago** as a symbol of violence in its crumbling public housing projects.

Hundreds have attended vigils. The Rev. Jesse Jackson has helped raise thousands of dollars for the girl's recovery. Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan has prayed at her bedside.

"It's a horrible, horrible thing," said the Rev. Maxine Walker, a Baptist minister. "It makes you wonder what kind of consciousness, what kind of mind, would do this."

Her suffering began on the snowy morning of Jan. **9** when she left a playmate's apartment and started home alone through the Cabrini-Green housing project.

When the 4-foot-8, 64-pound child was found hours later, a gasoline-like substance was in her stomach and a pitchfork emblem of the Gangster Disciples street gang was scrawled across her body.

Ever since, she has been in a hospital bed, armed guards at her door around the clock.

Police have shown the graffiti **to** a handwriting expert, but they don't know whether they are looking for gang members or an assailant using the scrawlings as a decoy. Dozens of men have been questioned and some given lie-detector tests. Informants within the gangs are being pressed for clues.

"We're still progressing," said police Cmdr. Joseph Griffin. "Some cases you **reach** a dead end where you're pretty well stuck, but this thing has been ongoing."

Concern over the case has been driven by recognition that life in Cabrini-Green and similar housing projects leaves children badly scarred.

The city is tearing down the worst buildings, but progress is slow and thousands still live amid rats, trash, drug- pushing gangs and dim, foul-smelling stairwells.

Still, reaction **to** the attack was slow in coming.

In Saturday's **Chicago** Sun-Times, columnist Lee Bey contrasted the initially mild reaction **to** the Girl X case **to** the furor over the slaying of 6-year-old Colorado beauty queen JonBenet Ramsey.

"The Cabrini-Green **rape** would be widely known had the **victim** been white," he wrote. "Then it would have been news. Some legislator would have pushed for tougher laws against brutalizers of children."

On Wednesday, black-oriented radio station WGCI parked its mobile studio outside Children's Memorial Hospital, and its disc jockeys spent 16 hours broadcasting appeals for donations for the girl. Station officials estimate they raised \$50,000.

The hospital, at the request of the girl's mother, is not releasing details about her condition.

Beverly Reed, a community organizer who coined the name Girl X after the mother asked **to** have her child's name kept secret, estimated that she has raised an additional \$30,000, **to** pay for psychiatric care and moving the family "so she'll never have **to** see Cabrini-Green again."

"This has stirred the soul of the community," Reed said.

She said the reason the case has resonated with people is that so many women, she included, have been **victims** of sexual assault.

"I feel that I am doing the work of every woman and every girl who has fallen prey **to** that kind of mind," she said.

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