

DRUGS AND FEAR AT HOUSING PROJECT YOUNG PUSHERS SPAWN WAVE OF VIOLENCE

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Friday, March 12, 1982

Author: SANDY McCLURE and ANDREA FORD, e Press Staff Writers

Heroin trafficking by street pushers as young as eight years old has terrorized residents of the Jeffries Homes public **housing** complex on the near west side for the past 14 months.

Police records show three men have been killed and one critically wounded in the past 18 days in what have become daily occurrences of gunplay around the intersection of Selden and Gibson in the **housing project** .

Young **drug** dealers competing for business fling themselves **at** vehicles driving into the subdivision, pushing their wares.

Residents, who say they listen to the gunfire outside and **fear** for their lives, lock themselves in **at** night and say they are wary of going out in the daytime.

A 15-year resident of the complex said Thursday the **drug** sales and gunfights are increasing.

"If I have to go to the store after dark, I don't go. I don't go out **at** night, period," she said. "There was a time when I didn't mind going out **at** night, but now I'm skeptical about going out in the daytime. You don't know when something is going to jump off."

She said she would move from her four-room apartment, for which she pays \$159 a month, if she could afford it. The woman, who asked not to be identified, is among an estimated 1,300 low-income, handicapped and elderly residents living in the section of the **project** where much of the activity occurs.

Even armed veteran police officers admit they don't feel safe there. "Everyone over there has a piece (gun)," one officer said Thursday.

In the latest incident, Keith Bobo, 17, was charged Thursday with first-degree murder in the death of Johnnie Broaden, 30, who was gunned down in his car near the intersection of Selden and Gibson **at** 2:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Bobo was arraigned before Recorder's Court Judge Helene White and was ordered held in the Wayne County Jail without bond pending a pre-trial examination March 19.

About two weeks ago, on Feb. 22, William Nabors, 30, was shot to death by a teenager as he sat in a car in the Jeffries complex. Police say Nabors and his brother were trying to buy **drugs** when the shooting occurred. The next night, police said Eddie Sterling, 29, and William Clemons, 28, were fired upon by a group of young men. Sterling was killed and Clemons was critically wounded. They also were trying to buy **drugs**, police said.

Police and residents say **drug** trafficking became a serious problem in the Jeffries in the winter of 1980 when police cracked down on similar activities in the Brewster-Douglass public **housing** complex. Police said the **drug** peddlers moved their operation about two miles west to the Jeffries.

ONE SENIOR narcotics officer said the young boys operate in the intersection "like a fast-food service for **drugs**."

"They are as young as eight, nine or 10 years old . . . They work for a seller who gives them a percentage of the sales," said Lt. Eugene Rhodes of the Detroit Police Department's Narcotics Section.

"These little guys can earn \$40 to \$50 a day, peddling **drugs** two hours after school. What can (their) parents say? They can't make that kind of money."

Rhodes said the youths sell out of the buildings in the **housing** complex. "It's like a fast-food service," he said. "Get 'em in, get 'em out."

"There are so many kids out there, you'll find some of the more aggressive ones jumping on car hoods trying to make a sale before their buddies," Rhodes added.

A PROSPECTIVE **drug** buyer can pull off the southbound Lodge **at** the Forest Avenue exit, travel about 100 feet along the service drive to a parking lot that serves a portion of the **project** and pull in near Buildings 605, 608 or 801 -- the center of the **drug** dealing, Rhodes said -- for a quick buy, then make a hasty retreat back to the southbound Lodge.

In a transaction that can be completed in seconds, young dealers run out of the **housing project**'s buildings, make their heroin sales and dart back inside.

Catching a **drug**-dealing youngster who manages to get as far as the front door of a high-rise building is next to impossible, Rhodes said, because "there are so many places to hide."

NARCOTICS officers have made more than 500 arrests in the Jeffries near Wayne State University since December 1980. But many of those apprehended have been minors whom the courts and juvenile authorities have returned quickly to the street, Rhodes said in a complaint echoed by residents of the area.

Many adult dealers also are back selling **drugs** before the officers who arrested them finish their paperwork in the cases, he said.

Residents claim the rate of violent crime **at** the Jeffries Homes is higher than police records show. Police agree, saying most people hurt in **drug** -related violence do not report it to police and lie to hospital personnel about how their injuries occurred.

"The people know who's doing it," said Rhodes, "but they're afraid to testify. They've got to go back to that area to live."

NOW, SOME **project** residents apparently have decided to fight back.

Police Chief William Hart describes the Jeffries residents as "outraged . . . They're not going to be chased out. They're going to stay there and fight." Hart said witnesses to crimes are "coming forward now like never before."

**

Caption: MapC MOSES HARRIS

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 1A

Index Terms: CHILDREN ; PROJECT; CRIME ; DRUG

Record Number: 8301020185

Copyright (c) 1982 Detroit Free Press