

## **GANG SQUAD 10 DAYS WITH THE COPS WAGING THE FIGHT ON KID DOPE PEDDLERS**

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Staff photographer David C. Turnley spent **10 days with the** Detroit Police Department's Youth Crime Unit -- **the gang squad** . Here, in words and photos, is **the** first part of his report.

A lot was happening at **the** corner of Joy Road and McQuade -- traffic, people walking and riding bikes, teenage boys hanging out **on** both sides of **the** street. No one movement in all of this activity stood out unless you studied it, as I did for several hours, accompanied by two officers of **the** Detroit Police Department's **gang squad** .

From **the** second story of an abandoned house, I saw a boy standing across **the** street **with** a pair of binoculars, looking up and down **the** street. A large group of boys was hanging out in front of a telephone booth in front of a store, and one boy was standing at **the** phone answering calls every few minutes.

A few boys stood **on the** corners **on the** other side of **the** street, and one boy rode his bike back and forth. As cars drove by and slowed, shouts were heard from boys **on the** corners. "Payday! Payday! Payday!"

A CAR pulled to a stop, one of **the** boys looked at **the** driver in **the** car and held up one or two fingers. **The** boy waited for an answer from **the** driver, looked across **the** street at another boy and again held up one or two fingers.

**The** boy across **the** street ran behind a building, quickly returned, ran across **the** street and slapped something into **the** hand of **the** boy who had held up his fingers. He, in turn, ran to **the** car, reached in, and an exchange was made.

**The** boy then ran back across **the** street and gave money to **the** young man who had been standing at **the** telephone. This all happened in less than a minute, and **the gang squad** officers confirmed what became obvious -- this was a heroin transaction.

After several similar events, **the** young man who had been collecting money went to **the** telephone and made a call. A few minutes later, a car showed up, a man stuck his hand out **the** window and **the** young man who made **the** call gave him a handful of money. **The** car left.

Every once in a while, all **the** boys ran into an arcade or disappeared down **the** street. A few seconds later a police car drove by. Minutes later, **the** boys returned to their places **on the** sidewalk. **On the** last of **the 10 days** I spent **with the** Detroit Police Department **gang squad** , I walked into **the** back room where officers do **the** paper work **on the** people they arrest or detain.

A young man was stretched out comfortably in a chair smoking a cigarette. He was wearing a neatly pressed brown shirt and matching jogging pants and basketball shoes. He was not handcuffed, and seemed relaxed as he jived **with the** officers.

WHAT WAS DIFFERENT about this scene from many similar ones I observed was **the** presence of a large pile of heroin packets **on the** desk next to **the** arresting officer.

By now, I had seen many packets of confiscated heroin. A single packet, unimpressive in appearance, looks like a folded piece of white paper. Some packets I saw were stamped **with** labels, such as "P. Funk Raw Dog" or "Real **Dope**" -- brand names for heroin used by Young Boys Inc., a narcotics organization which recruits juveniles to distribute heroin **on the** streets of Detroit.

This suspect, Andre R. Junior, was 19. Arrested after **the** cab he was in ran a stop sign, he was charged **with** possessing 320 packets of heroin. An innocent plea was entered for him in 36th District Court and he was released **on** \$25,000 bond. His preliminary exam is scheduled for Monday.

JUNIOR MADE no secret of his connection **with** Young Boys.

"What I do, for me, is a job. I ain't no scrumpy, scroungy guy that's got to be out there selling **dope** for a meal. I hate **dope**. I hate **dope** fiends. I consider it one of **the** lowest forms of life. None of us use it -- that's a serious violation."

One officer asked him about a gold ring mentioned widely in news stories as a symbol of **the** Young Boys organization. **The** gold ring, confiscated in a narcotics raid, is in **the** shape of **the** United States, **with** diamonds studded in several states. **The** officer wanted to know if **the** diamonds represented locations of other Young Boys Inc. operations.

Junior said, " **The** media is exaggerating a whole lot of things about Young Boys. There was a boy who bought one of those rings and a lot of people liked it and just started copying it. They make Young Boys seem a whole lot bigger than it is." I asked him if I could interview him so he could set everything straight. He said, "No way." When I first approached **the** Detroit Police Department about doing a photographic essay **on the** " **gang squad** ," a group of some of **the** most street-wise **cops** in Detroit, there was hesitation, though eventually I was given complete access to **the squad** and its activities.

Some officers felt that media attention in **the** past had glamorized **gangs** and given youths an incentive to join them.

Back in **the** summer of 1975, several youth **gangs** were fighting among themselves in territorial disputes **on the** city's east side. That's why **the gang squad**, called **the** Youth Crimes Unit, was formed. **The** names of **the gangs** -- **the** Chains, Bishops, Earl Flynn's, Coney Oneys -- became household words, and soon, **gang squad** officers say, **gangs** became a problem **on the** city's west side as well.

By **the** late 1970s, some of **the gangs** began using their organizations for money-making activities. In **the** summer of 1979, **the gang squad** became aware of Young Boys Inc., operating in **the** vicinity of Elmhurst and Martindale **on the** west side.

It is this group, and others which imitate its methods, which **the** police are now confronting **on** a full-time basis. **The** Youth Crimes Unit of **the** Detroit Police Department is located in **the** Special Crimes Building, known as "**the** castle," **on** Grand River **on the** city's near west side.

It is a group of about 50 men and three women police officers, all chosen for their ability to interact **with** adolescents. Many officers want to join **the squad**; there are few requests to leave.

It's a matter of some pride among **the** officers that **the** group has considerable racial and ethnic diversity. Sgt. Harold Cureton said, "You have a variety of people here. Everybody here isn't of **the** typical police mentality -- some, yeah -- but you have all kinds of people, all races."

Officer Frank Fowler said, "It makes for good harmony. I don't know if **the** department sat down and said we'll take this officer or that officer. But whatever they got, they shook it up and it came up very good." "Do we have a go from unit 62?"

"Affirmative. Go from 62."

"OK, all units go. All units go . . . "

Four of us were in an unmarked car, one of several unmarked cars converging **on** Dexter and Monterey, a street corner **on** Detroit's near west side. My companions, three members of **the gang squad**, were ready to spring from **the** car. This was a strike **on** a suspected Young Boys operation that officers had been observing all morning. Going in, they knew exactly who they were looking for.

Suddenly, Lt. Dave Simmons spotted **the** man who was suspected of carrying **the** heroin. **The** man saw us, too, and took off running. We chased him in **the** car.

"Right there! Right there!" Simmons yelled. "Get it! Get it! Get him! Get him, Johnny! That's **the** guy right there! Go **on**, Johnny! Cut **the** corner! Hit hard!"

**The** running man slipped, and in a split second **the** car screeched to a halt **on the** lawn in front of a big building and **the** three officers were out of **the** car **with** their revolvers drawn.

"Freeze! Put your hands straight up! Straight up! Move again -- look up -- and I'll blow your brains out! Put some cuffs **on** him."

**The** 27-year-old man had **10** packs of P. Funk Raw Dog and \$156 **on** him and was charged **with** possession of narcotics.

Nine were arrested **on** this strike, and though **the** officers knew there had to have been more heroin stashed nearby -- perhaps in a trash dumpster, perhaps in a drain spout -- they couldn't find it. "What we do is primarily harassment (of suspected street narcotics operations), plain and simple -- to drive them off **the** street," said Sgt. Cureton as he explained **the** work of **the gang squad** . Cureton has been **with the gang squad** 2 1/2 years.

"I judge our effectiveness by **the** amount of **dope** we confiscate even more than **the** amount of convictions because that's not our area of expertise. There's one thing -- they may be able to get **the** money back that we put in evidence but they damn sure can't get that **dope** back."

In Detroit, both **the gang squad** and **the** narcotics unit of **the** police department are working to make it more difficult for **the** Young Boys to operate **on the** city's streets. **The** narcotics unit deals **with the** source of heroin and **the gang squad** deals primarily **with the** juveniles commissioned to sell it.

**The gang squad** doesn't have **the** authority to make buys but instead tries to match **the** innovativeness of **the** Young Boys.

Cureton talked about what he and his colleagues are up against. "They stash **the dope** someplace. Then they go back and forth to it. So, unless you catch somebody going to a car getting ready to sell to somebody **on the** street, nine out of **10** times he won't have **dope** in his actual possession. He'll have somebody guarding **the** bag. **The** guy who is dealing will run back there while another guy is handling **the** money, so it is hard to tie this in." I came to understand both **the** determination and **the** frustration of these officers when I observed **the** investigation of an incident in which five boys were shot, caught in **the** eruption of a Young Boys feud.

When I went home **the** night it happened, Inspector James Younger was still in **the** office directing **the** investigation. When I returned two **days** later, Younger was still there, having not gone home or finished **the** investigation.

Resting against **the** podium used for roll calls, Younger looked up and said, "Fellas, it is gettin' funky out there."

It is obvious from talking to several officers that what they are dealing **with** leaves them **with** many torn emotions.

One said, "One **day** they brought in a 17-year-old and he had all this money and gold **on** him and I walked outside to go home and there was his clean, white Mercedes sitting right next to my old rusty Fiat. I asked myself, " Who is **the** real fool?" "

A number of officers believe **the** easy money, fast life and **the** belief of **the kids** that crime is necessary for survival make it somewhat understandable that **kids** get involved in selling **dope** . "Not to say that's an excuse," Sgt. Cureton said. An 18-year-old suspect named Kevin sat in **the gang squad** headquarters. He asked that his last name not be given. He is a lieutenant in Young Boys Inc., and officers observed him working in a heroin operation at Dexter and Monterey **on the day** I spoke **with** him. When **the** sweep went down, however, he was not in possession of heroin. He was issued a disorderly conduct ticket.

As a lieutenant in Young Boys, Kevin said his job is to hire and organize a number of boys as runners. He earns up to \$1,500 a week, which he spends **on** gold, diamonds, clothes and travel and **on** things for his mother.

He doesn't use heroin. He said he has four brothers in prison and one of them told him he was "sick" for selling **dope** . When asked if he thought he, too, might end up in prison, he said, "Maybe."

When asked about trying to get a regular job, Kevin said, "There are no jobs available **with** Reaganomics, and I'm not gonna sweat my ass off in a plant for 2 or 300 dollars a week when I can make **the** kind of money I'm makin'." He said he wouldn't work a real job unless it paid at least \$500 a week.

Asked if he could resign from Young Boys any time he wanted, he said, "Yes," but fidgeted uncomfortably as he said it.

He said **the** "wrecking crew" takes care of members who steal **dope** or money from **the** organization by beating them **with** baseball bats, or in **the** winter by stringing them up in front of an open window and throwing water **on** them until it freezes.

**The** wrecking crew, I had been told, is **the** disciplinary arm made up of lieutenants in Young Boys. In **10 days** of observing **the** organization, no other members would talk about it.

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Caption: Pix DAVE TURNLEY

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