

# Teen gangbangers an ignored issue

by Mike Royko

If the presidential candidates of both parties want to enliven their debates, they might talk about what they'll do about Jawon.

Jawon, 14, lives on the West Side of Chicago. No permanent address. He and his fellow gang members pick out an abandoned building and call it home.

The cops assume that his source of income is crime—theft, extortion, maybe drug errands for older gang members. He can barely read or write and doesn't attend school, but he has street smarts.

Lately, he has been showing up around the Herbert Elementary School, 2131 W. Monroe St., not to learn but just the opposite. He teaches young

kids how to join the gang; what hand signals and gang colors to wear to avoid being shot.

Kids are valuable to gangs. Because of their age, they can shoot someone, run drugs or pull a stickup and get a lighter rap.

Jawon has already learned to handle a gun. He's currently awaiting a hearing for wounding another boy during a gang dispute.

He can also drive a car. Not only drive it but bust in, hotwire the ignition, tear out the radio, and go joy riding.

If a 14-year-old in a prep school says he is going to blow you away with an automatic weapon, you might chuckle. On the West Side, and other city neighborhoods like it, there are probably 100 automatic weap-

ons for every tennis racket.

That thought has crossed the mind of the principal of Jawon's elementary school, who was more than a bit upset when Jawon was set free by the judge for wounding another kid with a gun in a gang confrontation.

"I have to say to you I'm a little angry. No, a lot angry. There's nothing to prevent him from getting a gun and blowing me away. The judge told Jawon that he doesn't want him near the school. What are they going to do if he doesn't obey?"

"What's this telling the kid? That he can do anything he wants. It will continue until he murders someone. He's already shown that he has access to guns and that he's willing to use one.

"One of my jobs is protect-

ing my students from gang activity. I can't even protect myself. How am I supposed to protect the kids?"

"If he comes around and I call the police, what am I going to charge him with? Trespassing? Hell, he shot a kid in the face and he's on the streets. Are they going to put him away for trespassing?"

Questions, questions. Who has the answers? We have a kid of 14, no parents, living the gang life with no skills or prospects other than crime. There are thousands like him.

Is there anything in the president's crime package about that? Not that I've noticed.

A principal fears death. And he's not the only one. What do the candidates propose to do about this sort of educational

environment?

An adolescent says he'll get an Uzi. He just might. The gangs now consider a six-shooter an antique. What will the candidates do to keep military hardware out of the hands of the Jawons?

You can rap the judge. But we have a national surplus of young criminals and a shortage of cells. Shall we build more prisons? Sure, and what will you say when the tax bill comes?

Yes, you could devote a debate to Jawon. Or even a State of the Union speech. The silence would be deafening.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I am writing to you in regard to the University Board of Regents. It disturbs me to see the Board filled with one-sided Maxson groupies.

I appeal to Danny Tarkanian to seek a seat on the Board of Regents. There's a common saying that states, "Don't bite the hand that feeds you." The students of UNLV and the people of Las Vegas must have at least one person who is not afraid to bite off the entire arm.

In my opinion it is time to support someone who will support the students, the university and not the man in the Jack In The Box.

P. Fransen  
sophomore, criminal justice

Dear Editor,

I would like to share some thoughts with my fellow students and the administration here at UNLV regarding the volatile hostilities that have been circulating around the campus lately.

Stop for a moment to look at the incredible beauty of our earth, its colors and shapes and smells and creatures. Here there can be enchantment of human love and companionship. But, it is up to us. Secondly, as a creation of the universe, we are all participants in life's purposes which are loving, not evil; creative, not destructive; orderly, not chaotic. In that, will come a great peace and a great joy.

### What others are saying

The following appeared in Saturday's *Los Angeles Times*. Ed Fowler of the *Houston Chronicle* figures that with all the problems tied to the UNLV basketball program, there is probably little that shocks UNLV President Robert Maxson:

"If Maxson awakened to find a horse's head on the next pillow," Fowler writes, "he'd probably roll over and go back to sleep."

Wars in the past have caused nothing but misfortune and pain, and I find it shameful that we as an adult society have descended to these levels of indignity.

If the deplorable behavior is going to continue around our campus, then consider this. If we were to sell tickets to the "Methodical Maxson v. Tenacious Tarkanian" ringside squabble, then there would be no need for the administration to raise our college tuitions. This is what I call an equitably just solution to a problem that is dominated by incorporated hypocrisy.

Erin Himes  
student

Dear Editor,

What has gotten into these student parking meter enforcers? On two separate occasions I have witnessed these "enforcers" vehemently refusing a pleading student's request to tear up their ticket, since their meter had expired just seconds earlier.

I cannot understand how these kids

in baby-blue clothing, who patrol in golf carts, can possibly be power corrupt.

Perhaps they have a deep-rooted jealousy of people who drive real cars. Or maybe it is because of that walkie-talkie they carry... it goes right to their heads! These are the same type of people who wear headphones at McDonald's. Anyway, they really are taking their jobs much too seriously.

So if you get a ticket from these people, do not argue with them. It may come back to haunt you the next time you order a Big Mac.

Glenn Bidari  
Senior, Communications

Dear Editor,

"Nature never intended the fairer sex to become cornetists, trombonists and players of wind instruments." So said a theatre musical director in 1904 when he learned the American Federation of Musicians was accepting women as members. He deplored women from even playing these types of instruments because by doing so they would not "look

pretty."

I want to tell you about a female bassoon player in the Sierra Wind Quartet. Friday at noon I attended a recital at the Ham Fine Arts building at UNLV. At first I was apprehensive upon entering the room as I found myself a "regular person" among all the many "students" milling about.

This recital was obviously put together primarily for the student body. At the end I was, however, very grateful the public had been welcomed to attend. What I was subjected to during the 45-minute recital was like a flower with three leaves and one blossom.

The Sierra Wind Quartet is an impressive group of talented individuals that have come together to create a masterpiece. No wonder they are recording "Eight Etudes and a Fantasy" this year.

Even though the difficulty of the piece and the overwhelming abilities of the group are impressive, one cannot help but notice the "fairer sex" blossom who does "look pretty." Kristin Wolf (bassoon player extraordinaire) is far from your average stuffy looking bassoon fat lady.

I am convinced that the next star of stars in the woodwind world is right here at our own UNLV. Thank you, Kristin, for an enjoyable afternoon. I look forward to hearing you all again on March 22 at the Charleston Heights Center at 2 p.m.

Mark Trinko  
Las Vegas resident

## Boulder Dan & Dipstik Duck

By Ray Collins

