

DON'T SHOOT

A radical approach to the problem of gang violence.

BY JOHN SEABROOK

In April, 2006, two brutal street killings in the Over-the-Rhine section of Cincinnati spread fear through the city. A white suburban mother of three, who was trying to buy drugs at the corner of Fourteenth and Race, got into an argument with the dealer, and was shot and killed. A few days later, on the same block, four white kids, also from the suburbs—a boy at the wheel, three girls in the back—were buying drugs when a black man walked up to the car and shot the boy in the head.

These incidents, coming within days of each other, contributed to the public's impression that violent crime in the streets was out of control. In fact, much of the violence was occurring between people who were closely connected. Young black men were shooting each other over drug deals gone bad; in the majority of cases, the victims and the shooters knew each other. Nevertheless, although the average Cincinnati had little chance of getting shot on the street, citizens perceived potential killers everywhere. And that presented Chief Thomas Streicher and his assistant chief, Lieutenant Colonel James Whalen, of the Cincinnati Police Department, with two problems: a crime spree and a public-relations crisis.

The killings were perpetrated mostly by gangs, or "groups"—the expression preferred by Cincinnati civic leaders. "Not real organized gangs such as your Crips and Bloods and whatnot," Whalen told me. "More like loose-knit groups of guys hanging out on street corners." In the summer of 2006, Streicher and Whalen implemented a "zero tolerance" plan. They assembled an élite sixty-man crime-fighting squad code-named Vortex, which began making sweeps of high-crime areas, or "hot spots," arresting people not just for serious crimes but also for misdemeanors, like jaywalking and loitering. By the end of September, more than twenty-six hundred arrests had been made.

The drawback of zero tolerance is that it tends to make law-abiding citizens in

hot spots almost as fearful of the police as they are of the criminals. As Whalen, a big, bearlike man with a friendly Irish face, put it to me recently, "You say, 'O.K., we're going to arrest everyone who jaywalks.' So who do you arrest? Someone's grandmother, or the milkman, or some guy who has just worked a sixteen-hour day and is trying to get home as fast as he can. It's bullshit. Even in high-crime neighborhoods, there are a lot of honest people living there. Meanwhile, the real bad guys—they know a sweep is on, so they just stay inside until things cool off."

The Cincinnati Police Department's relationship with the black community had been a poisonous issue for years. In March, 2001, the A.C.L.U. and a local civil-rights group filed a lawsuit against the city for racial profiling and excessive force. Three weeks later, after a police officer chased and fatally shot an unarmed nineteen-year-old black man, the city was engulfed in three days of riots, arson, and looting. Whalen was the commanding officer of the riot-response team, and he saw firsthand the utter breakdown of trust between the cops and the community. In 2002, as part of an agreement reached to settle the A.C.L.U. lawsuit and in response to a Department of Justice investigation, a federal monitor was appointed to oversee reforms in the police department. Some progress had been made since the riots, but Operation Vortex threatened to undo it.

Vortex did reduce street crime, according to the police. But it had little effect on the city's murder count, which, with twelve murders in September of 2006 and a deadly spurt over the holidays, finished the year at eighty-nine, the highest number since recordkeeping began.

After the 2001 riots, the Cincinnati police heard from dozens of academics and criminologists, who proposed a variety of policy initiatives aimed at improving relations with the community.

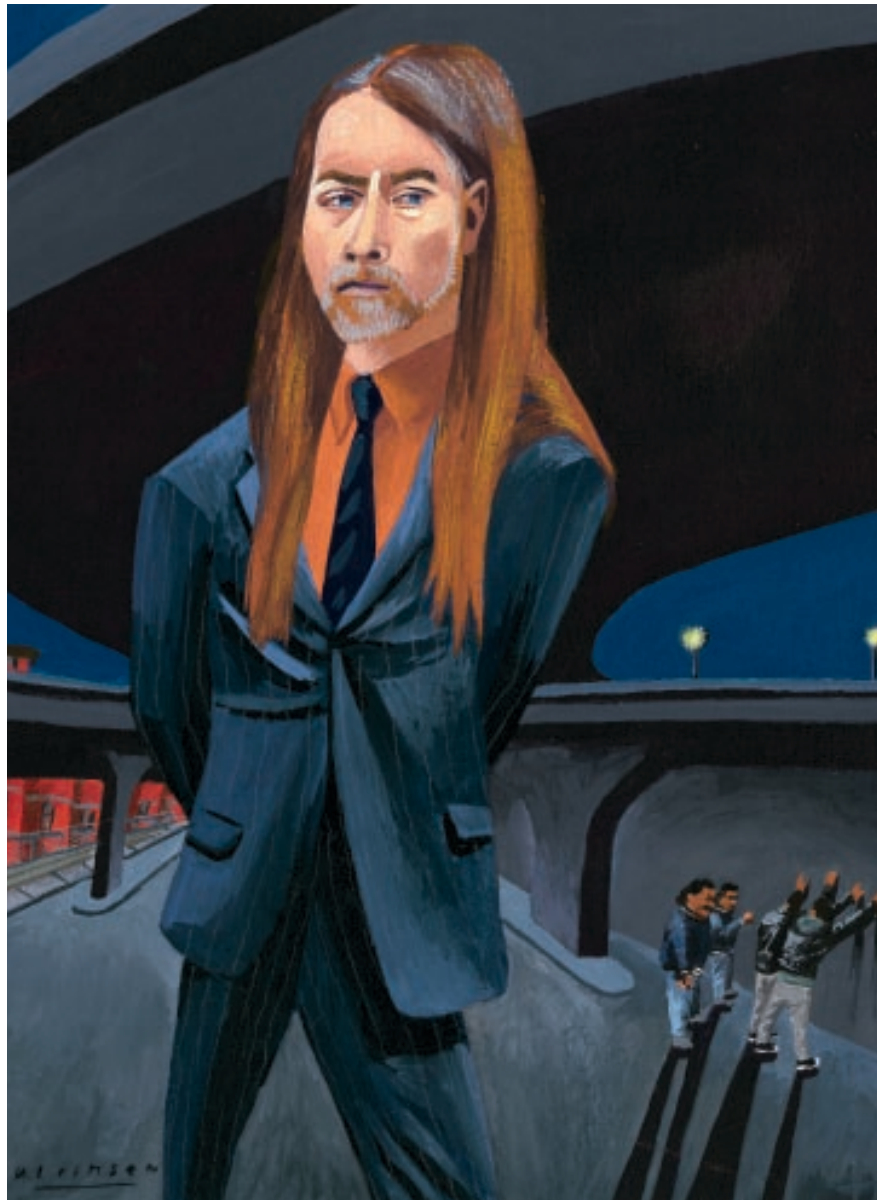
Captain Daniel Gerard, who took over Vortex in the fall of 2007, didn't put much stock in their ideas. As he said, "Academia and law enforcement are at opposite ends of the spectrum. They like theories, we like results."

Therefore, when David Kennedy, a professor in the anthropology department at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, in New York City, came to Cincinnati in the fall of 2006 to pitch a program he had devised to counter gang violence, the cops didn't expect much. Kennedy was tall and slim, and in the dark clothes he favored there was something about him of the High Plains Drifter—the mysterious stranger who blows into town one day and makes the bad guys go away. He wore a grizzled beard and had thick, unbound hair that cascaded halfway down his back. "What's some guy who looks like Jesus got to tell us about crime in Cincinnati?" was the line around police headquarters.

Kennedy had been approached by Dr. Victor Garcia, the head of the trauma unit at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, who was seeing almost daily the effects of the city's violent gangs: the stabbings, shootings, and beatings, and the injuries to innocent children caught in the crossfire. "Children with their eyes shot out, children paralyzed," Garcia told me. "I started to wonder, instead of treating injuries, how can we prevent them from happening in the first place?" Garcia and a local councilman named Cecil Thomas arranged a conference call between Kennedy and Mark Mallory, Cincinnati's recently elected mayor. Two months later, Kennedy outlined his plan to the city's officials and community leaders.

Ceasefire, as Kennedy's program is sometimes known, begins with the fact, commonly recognized by criminologists, that a small number of hardened criminals commit a hugely disproportionate number of serious violent crimes. Often, much of the violence is caused by gang dynamics: score settling, vendettas, and turf issues, all played out according to the law of the streets. Arresting the shooters doesn't generally stop the killing; nor does threatening them with long prison sentences. But one thing does work, Kennedy had discovered: telling them to stop.

In Cincinnati, Kennedy explained, the police would first identify gang members on parole or probation and compel them



David Kennedy told Cincinnati that gang-related murders could be cut in half.

to attend a meeting. There the cops would deliver an ultimatum: the shootings must stop. "And if they do not stop," Kennedy said, "the consequences will be swift, and certain, and severe, and punishment will be handed out not just to the individual involved in the shooting but to everyone in that individual's gang."

The young men in the gangs would also be given a phone number that they could call for help. The city would make life coaching and job counselling available to those who wanted out of the thug life. "We don't promise them jobs—we promise to do the best we can for them," Kennedy said. Clergy, ex-gang members, and victims and their family members would be on hand to deliver the moral component of the message to the offenders:

"What you are doing is wrong, and we know you can do better."

Like many politicians, Mallory was concerned about being branded soft on crime, especially at a time when citizens were calling for more police, longer prison terms for offenders, and the construction of a new jail. But the police seemed unable to reduce the homicide rate, and Ceasefire offered a fresh approach to the problem—Kennedy all but guaranteed the Cincinnati civic leaders that if they followed his plan the city would reduce its gang-related murder count by forty to fifty percent in a year. At the end of the meeting, the Mayor, the city manager, and the city council gave their support to the plan, and about five hundred thousand

dollars was budgeted over two years.

The police remained skeptical. To Chief Streicher, a blond and youthful fifty-five-year-old with a military bearing, whose demeanor and posture, and even the ring of his name (pronounced “striker”), signal a man of action, Ceasefire sounded like a social program promoted by do-gooders. And the cops did not like the idea of being on a team with social workers. Whalen explained to me the C.P.D.’s distinction between social workers and cops: “Social people hug thugs. We kick their butts.”

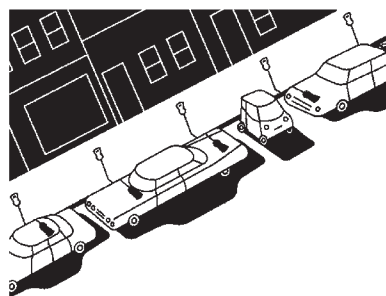
Cincinnati has always had a strong conservative streak, and its police force is no exception. In responding to crime outbreaks, police tactics hadn’t changed much since Whalen’s father was a cop, battling Vietnam War protesters in the sixties. “Peace through superior firepower,” Gerard told me. The C.P.D. relied heavily on its fleet of vehicles; “send another car” was standard operating procedure when dealing with disturbances. Whalen explained, “You’ve got a problem at Fourteenth and Vine, so you send a couple of cops out there to that corner.” But even within hot spots crimes were viewed as isolated incidents. “We’d say, ‘We’ve got a problem with Jerry, or Frank—we got to pick that individual up,’” Whalen said. Little effort was made to aggregate crime data, so that the information could be analyzed for patterns, which would situate Jerry’s and Frank’s offenses within a context and a network. The beat cops often understood the context, but their captains and commanders rarely asked for their advice. As a result, Streicher and Whalen and the rest of the C.P.D. leadership had no hard data about how many of the murders in the city were gang-related, what the real motives for the killings were, and how the shooters and the victims were connected.

In May of 2007, beat cops and investigators were summoned from Cincinnati’s five districts to the new regional Homeland Security Center to meet Kennedy and participate in two eight-hour information-gathering sessions, overseen by Dr. Robin Engel, the director of the University of Cincinnati Policing Institute. Everyone gathered in the command room, where large maps of each of the districts were spread out on tables. The researchers began a “gang audit”

with the first district. Cops were asked to draw on the map the location of any gangs they were aware of, which would be represented by numbered circles. The officers relied on anecdotal information that they had picked up on the streets. Engel and her students peppered them with questions. Where is the group located? How many members does it have? Is it allied with any other gangs? Does it have any conflicts or “beefs”—which tend to be ongoing vendettas sometimes triggered by a long-forgotten slight—with other gangs? What kinds of criminal activity is it involved in? How organized is it? How violent is it? Does the gang have any identifying “tags” (graffiti) or colors? Are there any standout individuals? A form containing some of these questions was projected on a giant video screen on one wall.

“You could see the cops were wary of us at first,” Engel said. “They saw us as outsiders—which we were.” But soon the cops from the other districts started marking up their maps and answering the questions on the form even before Engel and her students reached them. “That’s when I knew we were going to win them over,” Whalen said.

The researchers collated and analyzed all this information. They identified and mapped sixty-nine gangs, which the cops estimated to contain a thousand individuals altogether; over the coming months, the cops managed to name eight hundred of these. The researchers also prepared “sociograms”—visual representations of the dynamics among the different gangs—in which gangs allied with each other were connected with green lines, and gangs pursuing conflicts were connected with red lines. With the names of the gang members, the researchers were able to mine the cops’ field-incident reports, surveillance records, and arrest sheets to flesh out patterns of criminal behavior. Among the facts they discovered about the gang members was that a



third of them had ten or more felony charges, and ninety-one per cent had a prior arrest for a violent crime.

David Kennedy is not a cop, or an academically trained criminologist, and his lack of formal schooling in either the practice or the theory of crime control may be his strongest qualification for his job. In the bifurcated world of criminology, Kennedy is able to speak to both cops and academics. His 2008 book, “Deterrence and Crime Prevention,” has been described by scholars as a landmark rethinking of public policy, but it can also be read as a primer on twenty-first-century policing. George Kelling, the co-author, with James Q. Wilson, of the influential 1982 essay “Broken Windows,” told me, “Cops put on a tough front about crime, but they really do care, and David speaks with passion, and with the credibility that comes from spending hours in the back of squad cars, so cops respond.”

Kennedy’s father, Christopher, a mechanical engineer, was born in the Clinton Hill neighborhood of Brooklyn, not far from where David lives now, in Fort Greene, but Kennedy was raised in a suburb of Detroit, where his father worked in the auto industry, designing suspension systems. The family valued “ruthless common sense,” Kennedy told me. “Good thinking!” was the highest compliment David and his two sisters could receive from their parents. He attended Swarthmore College, where he studied moral philosophy.

The idea that the threat of punishment can act as an effective deterrent to crime goes back to the eighteenth-century Italian philosopher Cesare Beccaria and the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham. Beccaria’s 1764 essay, “On Crimes and Punishments,” was among the first works in Western literature to argue for a humane and rational system of criminal justice and against torture and the death penalty. Beccaria thought that punishment should be proportional to the crime and preventive, not retributive. In order for the threat of punishment to be an effective deterrent, he wrote, the punishment itself had to be swift, severe, and certain; Beccaria added that certainty and swiftness were the most important of these qualities, and severity the least. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Bentham elaborated on Beccaria’s ideas, arguing that rational

men, faced with the choice between pleasure and pain, freedom and incarceration, and benefits and sanctions, will make the choice that yields the greater happiness. This assumption is one of the foundations of the American criminal-justice system.

Immanuel Kant, on whom Kennedy wrote his senior thesis, also considered the role of deterrence in matters of crime and punishment. From his reading of Kant, Kennedy said, he internalized the idea that “morality predicated on external pressures alone is never sufficient.” But Kennedy never anticipated that Kant’s ideas would help shape the core of his life’s work: designing a modern system of deterrence that includes a moral component.

After graduating, in 1980, Kennedy moved to Boston and became a freelance writer. He spent a year working on science and technology pieces before taking a salaried job as a case-study writer at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. One of his early assignments was to prepare case studies for the Harvard Executive Session on Community Policing, a

series of meetings attended by police chiefs, criminologists, and criminal-justice experts, who were brought together by Mark Moore, the founder of the school’s criminal-justice program. Many in the group agreed that the two traditional approaches to crime—the liberal remedy, which was to attack root causes like poverty, education, and social and economic injustice; and the conservative approach, which was to rely on the criminal-justice system—had proved insufficient, especially in dealing with inner-city drug and gang-related crimes. A third approach was needed, incorporating traditional elements and deploying police resources in new, creative ways.

Among the participants, who met periodically over five years, were Edwin Meese, then Reagan’s Attorney General; Ben Ward, the commissioner of the N.Y.P.D.; Daryl Gates, the chief of the L.A.P.D.; George Kelling; and Herman Goldstein, a University of Wisconsin law professor. Goldstein argued that enforcement alone is inherently limited, and

in confronting chronic street crime he stressed community involvement and a heavy reliance on the skills of beat cops and line officers. Goldstein named this approach “problem-oriented policing.”

In the mid-eighties, Kennedy, while researching his case studies, accompanied two Los Angeles beat cops to a housing project in the Watts area called Nickerson Gardens. The crack epidemic was just beginning, and Nickerson Gardens had become one of the most dangerous places in the city. As Kennedy got out of the squad car and looked around, “I couldn’t believe my eyes,” he told me, dropping his voice and slowing down. “I stood there on the sidewalk and watched civilization coming apart. Drug dealers on the street, drug runners, old guys guarding the stashes. People with thirty-year-long heroin addictions wandering around, serious crack addicts, with that manic look. And I had this strongly visceral response: This is not O.K. This has got to stop. And it was immediately obvious that nothing the police were doing was going to work.”

In 1988, Moore and Malcolm Sparrow, a Kennedy School professor who was a former detective chief inspector with the British police, asked Kennedy to work with them on a book about new ideas in policing. “So that’s where I got my graduate-school education,” Kennedy said. “I read everything, and talked about this stuff constantly.” He had always intended to return to freelance writing, he said, “but I realized that I was too committed to the work I was doing.” He asked Moore if he could become part of the criminal-justice program at the Kennedy School, and Moore hired him, in 1992.

“It was just a magical time,” Kennedy said, of the early nineties. “There was a sense that something profound had been figured out, and it was going to change everything. We had been dead wrong about crime for so long, and we could see we were at a point of transforming these institutions.”

In fact, nothing changed. Kennedy’s timing was terrible. From 1987 to 1990, during the peak of the crack epidemic, youth homicides in cities across America rapidly escalated; in Boston during that period, youth homicides increased two hundred and thirty per cent, and from 1991 to 1995 the city averaged about forty-four youth homicides a year. Across the country, from the smallest county judgeship to the Presidency of the United States, political races hinged more and more on the question of who could be tougher on crime. From 1980 to 2000, the prison population in the U.S. increased from three hundred and nineteen thousand to 1.3 million. Federal corrections expenditures, driven by new federal drug-sentencing changes, went from five hundred and forty-one million dollars in 1982 to more than \$6.9 billion in 2006, and state corrections expenditures that year totalled more than forty-two billion dollars. California now spends about two and a half times as much per prison inmate as it does per student in the University of California system.

By the mid-nineties, crime rates were dropping in cities around the country, nowhere more dramatically than in New York City, where Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Police Commissioner William Bratton were pioneering the zero-tolerance approach and drawing attention to Kelling and Wilson’s “broken windows”

theory by aggressively pursuing minor crimes. Advocates of longer sentencing and “three strikes” legislation cited those measures as the main reasons for the decline. Subsequent analysis by social scientists has suggested that the increase in incarceration was only a small factor in the great crime decline; other reasons, such as changing demographics and economic circumstances, and the waning of the crack epidemic, were collectively more important. Nonetheless, by the late nineties, incapacitation—locking a lot of people up for long terms to prevent crime—was the new ruling principle in criminal justice. Deterrence, in the classical sense of the word—using the threat of punishment to prevent crime—had become an even smaller part of public policy.

In 1994, the National Institute of Justice gave a grant to Kennedy and Anne Morrison Piehl, a colleague from the Kennedy School, to work out a problem-oriented approach to youth violence in Boston. They were joined by Anthony Braga, who was then a doctoral student in criminal justice at Rutgers University. Kennedy was eager to talk to cops who had the most street knowledge, and eventually he was directed to Paul Joyce, the leader of the police department’s Youth Violence Strike Force. Over the next six months, Joyce gradually revealed his methods for dealing with violent gangs. He had observed that the use of force and the threat of prison seemed to have little effect

in deterring gang members’ behavior. But certain moral authorities from within the community—clergy, ex-cons, outreach workers with street credibility—could sometimes get through to the offenders, especially when their pleas were coupled with the promise of help. Joyce had also figured out how to use the gangs’ own internal dynamics against them. Joyce was cryptic about this part of his operation; when Kennedy asked how he had managed to calm down one gang in particular, Joyce would say only, “We just told them the truth.” The truth, it turned out, was that if one more gang shooting occurred, by any one of their members, the whole group was going to take the blame.

“I just said, ‘Holy shit!’” Kennedy told me. “‘This is incredible! Do you realize what this means?’” Joyce’s techniques, he believed, could be used to formulate a method of “focussed deterrence”—a systematic, repeatable version of the ad-hoc working methods that Joyce and his partners had developed in the streets.

Kennedy also discovered that Joyce’s strike force knew how the victims knew the shooters, and what the beefs between them were. “I said, ‘Oh my God, you know all this stuff!’ ‘Sure we know it,’ Joyce replied. ‘It’s just that nobody asked us for it before.’”

In order to broadcast the messages that Joyce imparted informally to gangs citywide, Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl came up with the idea of group forums,

HUBRIS AT ZUNZAL

Nearly sunset, and time on the water
of 1984. Language its tracer.
No image like the image of language.

I had waded out about thigh deep.
Then a shout from the beach.
I held in my hand half a coconut shell

of coconut milk and 150-proof rum
and dumped it white into the waves
when it came on me how sweet it had been,

then the idea I was not finished,
then the act of reaching down
with the idea I would get it back.

—Rodney Jones

or call-ins. “We went to the Boston police command structure and presented it, thinking, This is never going to fly,” Kennedy said. “But they heard us out, and then said, ‘Yep, that’ll work.’”

The first call-in was in the spring of 1996, a few months after Joyce had been succeeded by Gary French. By the second round, that summer, youth homicide had dropped dramatically. Just eight homicides were committed over the five months following the first call-in, compared with twenty-eight in the same five months of the previous year—a seventy-one-percent decline. In October, there were no youth homicides at all. Things got so quiet that French thought his pager had stopped working. “I almost took my beeper in to have it checked,” he said at the time. “It just stopped going off.”

The Ceasefire team in Cincinnati came together during the first half of 2007. It included members of the police department and the U.S. Attorney’s office, the district attorney, and the

county sheriff, as well as Hamilton County probation and Ohio state parole officers. It also encompassed an array of social-service providers and a dozen or so outreach workers, who served as liaisons with the gang members. The cops, social workers, and outreach workers, some of whom were ex-cons, would all have a stake. The group acquired a name—C.I.R.V. (Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence)—offices downtown, and a project manager, S. Gregory Baker, a civilian who handles community relations for the C.P.D. Several former executives from Procter & Gamble, which is based in Cincinnati, volunteered their “best practices” management expertise to the group. Eventually, the C.I.R.V. team numbered almost fifty partner agencies.

The first Cincinnati call-in was held on July 31, 2007, in a large courtroom in the Hamilton County Courthouse. The C.I.R.V. team assembled in the courtroom first. Then about thirty men, mostly young, were admitted. Heads bent, avoiding eye contact, and sullenly postured like

the punctuation at the end of a question for which there is no answer—What the fuck?—they filed into the benches reserved for courtroom spectators. A few who were already in lockup wore handcuffs and leg shackles. They sat down, and the team in the front of the room looked at them. No one spoke.

Call-ins are intensely dramatic events, like modern-day morality plays. At the one I attended, there was a palpable, almost evangelical desire to make the experience transformative for the gangbangers. An older ex-gang member named Arthur Phelps, whom everyone called Pops, wheeled a thirty-seven-year-old woman in a wheelchair to the center of the room. Her name was Margaret Long, and she was paralyzed from the chest down. “Seventeen years ago, I shot this woman,” Phelps said, weeping. “And I live with that every day of my life.” Then Long cried out, “And I go to the bathroom in a bag,” and she snatched out the colostomy bag from inside the pocket of her wheelchair and held it up while the young men

stared in horror. When the final speaker, a street worker named Aaron Pullins III, yelled, "Your house is on fire! Your building is burning! You've got to save yourselves! Stand up!," three-quarters of the group jumped to their feet, as if they had been jerked up like puppets on strings.

At the initial call-in, Victor Garcia was the first to speak. He told the young men that he loved them, that they had value to their community, and that he knew they were better than their violent actions implied. Afterward, Chief Streicher addressed them, thanking them for coming, and making it clear that "this is nothing personal." He then delivered the message: "We know who you are, we know who your friends are, and we know what you're doing. If your boys don't stop shooting people right now, we're coming after everyone in your group." To reinforce this message at a later call-in, surveillance footage showing some of the invitees selling drugs was projected on a screen at the front of the courtroom. "Raise your hands when you see yourselves," Streicher said. One by one, hands went up.

The young men were introduced to the social workers, who were available to help them get jobs and educational assistance, if they called the phone number that had been provided to them in an information packet. And two mothers of sons murdered by gangs spoke of their pain and loss.

Michael Blass, a public official who was then with the Ohio Department of Public Safety, wrote an account of his experience as an observer at this first call-in. He described the invitees' "awkward attempts to project confidence, indifference, in some cases, perhaps, hostility. . . . These angry young men, used to being in control in the incredibly brutal environment of the mean streets, were noticeably off-balance and unsure of themselves." Blass wrote, "I saw a few young men choke back tears. . . . Over the course of a couple of hours, their facial expressions changed from those of cynicism or polite boredom to attention and curiosity." One young man raised his shackled hands above his head and cried out, "I never knew there was this much love out there . . . seriously, I never knew it."

One of the gang members invited to the meeting was Dante Ingram, twenty-nine, who had been selling drugs and stealing since he was fifteen. "That's how

we was brought up," he told me recently. "When your mom's a crackhead, your dad's in the joint, your brother sells drugs, and your best buddy got a Cadillac and Jordans—what else you going to do? You got no other role models." In 2006, Ingram had been caught with a large amount of marijuana and several guns in his house, and sentenced to ten years in federal prison, but it was his first felony conviction and the judge released him on probation. His probation officer had ordered him to attend the call-in.

Ingram told me that he was more influenced by the community-services aspect of the Ceasefire strategy than by the threat of swift and certain punishment. "During the cops' presentation, I wasn't really listening," he said. "Some guys around me were snoring. They were being the typical tough cops, threatening us and whatnot. But you got to understand—threats mean nothing to these guys."

Ingram kept the card with the phone number. "For the next three weeks, I looked at it every day," he told me. Finally, he called, and left Stan Ross, the head of the street workers, a message: "If this shit is for real, give me a call." Ross called, and within a month Ingram had a job in sales with a telemarketing firm.

Kennedy had cautioned the C.I.R.V. team that the murder rate would fall only moderately after the first call-in; it was after the second set of call-ins, "the second turn of the crank," as he put it, that the mechanism would really take hold. By the end of the year, homicides in Cincinnati in 2007 were down twenty-four per cent from 2006. The trend continued into 2008—by April, there had been a fifty-per-cent reduction in gang-related homicides. Kennedy had made good on his guarantee to the Mayor.

The fourth call-in, held in June, 2008, was a disaster. In contrast to the previous call-ins, during which the young men had been split up into smaller groups, this time a hundred and twenty of them were brought together at the same time, in the same room. In retrospect, this was one of several mistakes that the team made. "We lost control of the room," Whalen said. Also, for the first time, the team hadn't rehearsed, and, partly as a result, "We went off script," he said. Some street workers cursed, and one started flirting with a gang member's girlfriend.

("Girl, you fine. What you doin' hangin' with these thugs?") Other street workers referred to gang members as niggas, which the cops saw as a violation of propriety and state authority.

Kennedy told me, "Some people within the group had become hungry for that personal transformation, when the individual offenders jump up and declare themselves done with the thug life, and everyone cries. At the June meeting, they didn't get that reaction, and they ended up pushing too hard."

In the months after the call-in, the murder rate spiked upward. "We almost provoked them to violence," Whalen told me. "They went out of the room challenged."

Streicher threatened to pull the cops off the team if their concerns were not addressed. The Mayor assured Streicher that the mistakes would not be repeated, and persuaded the police to stay involved. Thanks to Greg Baker's work as project manager, C.I.R.V. did not go off the rails. The next call-in, scheduled for the fall of 2008, was moved back to December, in part to give the team a chance to regroup. For Kennedy, the important thing was that "the system self-corrected," he said. "That's huge."

Since its success in Boston, Kennedy's anti-gang-violence strategy has been tried in some sixty other cities. (Kennedy's method should not be confused with one devised in Chicago by Gary Slutkin, a physician and epidemiologist, which is sometimes referred to as CeaseFire. Slutkin's strategy employs community members to mediate potential shootings while also pushing for behavioral change in high-risk individuals and communities.) Kennedy helped Minneapolis implement a violence-prevention strategy in June of 1996, and homicides in the summer months fell from forty-two that year to eight in 1997. But in Minneapolis "the team lost focus," Kennedy told me, and "all the complicated parts of the mechanism didn't mesh." A similar thing happened, over the next five years, in Indianapolis and Stockton, California. Spectacular early results proved difficult to sustain. "Ceasefire takes a lot of manpower," Wayne Hose, a former chief of police in Stockton, told me. "And you have to have people who believe in it. You have to have someone who will call the

D.A.'s office and say, 'Why aren't your people coming to the meetings?'" Even in Boston, Ceasefire didn't last; the program was abandoned in 2000, partly as a result of a personality conflict among team members. By 2001, the number of homicides had risen more than a hundred per cent over the 1999 level, and it has remained high. In 2007, Gary French began to implement a renewed Ceasefire approach, and so far the results have been promising.

Franklin Zimring, a professor of law at the University of California at Berkeley, who is a leading deterrence scholar, told me that one reason that Ceasefire's effectiveness is difficult to predict in any given city is that Kennedy's results have not been subjected to a rigorous independent analysis. "Ceasefire is more a theory of treatment than a proven strategy," he said, adding, "It's odd that no one has ever said, 'O.K., here are the youths who were not part of the Ceasefire program in Boston, let's compare them to the youths who were. And no one has followed up with

any long-range studies of the criminal behavior of the group that was in the program, either. We just don't have the evidence, and until we do we can't evaluate how effective Ceasefire really is."

When I relayed Zimring's comments to Kennedy, he laughed. "Frank still doesn't get it," he said. "There's plenty of research, but it's not focussed on the impact on the people in the call-ins, because the strategy isn't just about the people in the room." He added, "When you have a couple of meetings and homicide city-wide goes down forty per cent, it's not because the forty guys you've talked to have turned their lives around. There are a thousand guys on the street you haven't talked to. But the forty get the word out to the thousand—which ruins them as controls for the kind of evaluation that Frank's talking about."

Perhaps Kennedy's greatest success to date has occurred in High Point, North Carolina, a small city, of some ninety thousand people, that is known for producing furniture. (The entire city smells

like varnish.) The High Point Strategy, as it has come to be known, was aimed at public drug dealing, not gang violence, but the methodology was largely the same. In 2004, Kennedy persuaded Jim Fealy, chief of the High Point police, to apply his problem-oriented approach to a long-standing open-air drug market in a neighborhood called West End. Fealy and his predecessor had tried for years to shut down the market with periodic sweeps and stings. "We would go in and arrest 'em, and things would quiet down for a few months, but then new guys would be back," he said. The Reverend Jim Summey, who was at the time the pastor of the English Road Baptist Church, in the center of West End, told me that on Sunday mornings there were so many drug dealers, prostitutes, and johns on the sidewalk in front of the church that worshippers coming for services couldn't steer their cars into the parking lot.

Fealy was seated at his desk when I spoke to him; a photograph behind him showed him in full SWAT regalia. "Ev-

everyone knows I'm as conservative as they come," he drawled. "My approach as a cop had always been either arrest the problem or scare the problem away with high-profile prosecutions. You know, 'Cuff 'em and stuff 'em.' But in West End the problem always came back." When he first heard about Kennedy's strategy, he thought it was ridiculous, but he agreed to meet him. "David said, 'Give me a half hour before you decide I'm crazy.' And at the end of that half hour I was still sitting there."

Kennedy's strategy not only closed down the West End drug market; the drug market disappeared the day after the first call-in. "We had worked on these problems for twenty years and got nowhere, and in one day it was over," Fealy said. "In one day. Honestly, I never would have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes."

It's unclear whether any of the dozen or so High Point drug dealers who called the services number ultimately left behind the life of crime. None of the root-cause problems behind drugs and crime were solved; drug dealing may have moved indoors, or to other neighborhoods, or to nearby cities. But public drug dealing never returned to West End, and, once the threat was removed from the streets, the community reclaimed its neighborhood. Within weeks, residents were planting flowers in their gardens, and in the spring of 2005 the community threw a barbecue for the police.

Colonel Dean Esserman, chief of the

Providence Police Department, brought Kennedy's strategy to open-air drug markets in his city, beginning in 2006, and so far the results have been spectacular and sustained. Esserman, a former assistant district attorney in New York City, now gives a speech he calls "Getting Ready for David Kennedy." When I asked Esserman what it takes to get ready, he responded with one word: "Failure." By that, he said, he meant "the failure of the idea that you can deal with the problem of drugs by arresting it." It had taken Esserman years of work on narcotics cases in New York to reach this state of readiness. "As a younger prosecutor, I wasn't ready. Maybe as a younger cop, Chief Streicher wasn't ready, either."

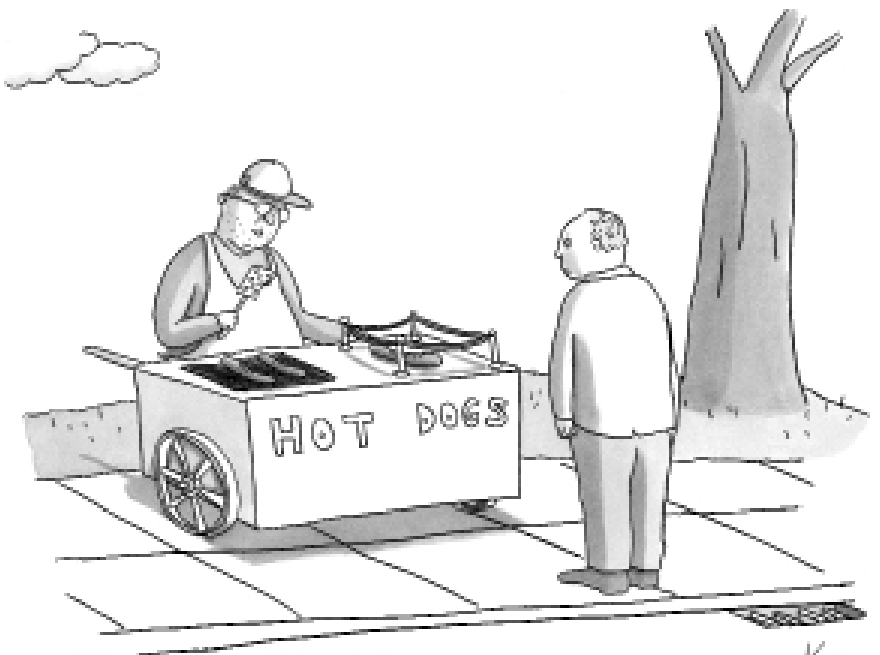
The next step for Kennedy and his colleagues is to expand these regional successes into what he calls a "national standard of practice." To that end, Kennedy is working with Jeremy Travis, the president of John Jay College, on a national network of people trained in the use of Ceasefire-style gang-violence and drug-market strategies. Kennedy, who is now the director of the Center for Crime Prevention and Control at John Jay, has submitted a white paper to Eric Holder, the Attorney General, outlining the proposal, and he and Travis plan to announce the National Network for Safe Communities on June 15th, at the annual meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors, in Providence.

"Clearly this stuff works," Travis said. "David has proved that when you communicate directly with offenders, tell them their actions have consequences—not abstract consequences but direct, immediate ones—and then offer them a way out, that it can have an enormous deterrence value." He added, "The last ten years have served as a proof of concept. In the next ten, we need to build a network that can institutionalize and sustain these practices around the country."

Could a methodology that works on gangs also work on other groups—terrorists, say? "The group dynamics are similar to the gang dynamics Ceasefire deals with," Kennedy said. "People don't think you could deter terrorists with a moral argument, but maybe you could." Marc Sageman, a terrorism expert who is the author of the 2008 book "Leaderless Jihad," told me, "There is quite a lot of evidence in the terrorism literature that this type of gang-intervention program can work, if you apply it to terrorists in the early stages of the radicalization process. Then it could very well work—because there's nothing deterministic about becoming a terrorist. But at a certain point, once terrorism becomes something one does for a higher cause, I don't think this type of method would work." Scott Atran, an anthropologist who has done field work with jihadist groups and is also on the faculty at John Jay, told me that Kennedy's "community-based ideas seem to jibe with what I see works with young people in neighborhoods where friends go off in bunches to jihad. Few ever join jihad alone, and they almost always commit to it, including suicide bombings, for love of friends and family." He added, "There's also a strong dose of 'jihadi cool' that clerics can't penetrate too well, unless they're plugged into the youth culture."

Stakes were high at the December, 2008, call-in. Kennedy went to Cincinnati for a rehearsal the week before, in an effort to avoid the mistakes of the disastrous June call-in. On December 10th, I accompanied him to the Hamilton County Courthouse. Kennedy wore his usual dark shirt, dark suit, and dark tie. The hall outside the courtroom was crowded with the heterogeneous group that makes up the C.I.R.V. team.

Jim Whalen was there, with his nineteen-year-old daughter, Amy, a student



"I'm saving that one for someone really special."

at the University of Cincinnati who works for Robin Engel at the policing institute. Chief Streicher was also there, scanning the crowd. His gunmetal gaze alighted on the Reverend Pete Mingo, a former serial robber and gang member, who is now one of the C.I.R.V. street workers. “When I was a younger cop, I used to chase Pete all over the city,” Streicher said. He laughed softly. “Now look at us.”

Members of the Vortex unit, in white dress shirts and creased blue pants, were on hand to provide security. Captain Gerard excitedly told Kennedy about the unit’s recent crackdown on the Northside Taliband, one of the largest and best-organized gangs in the city. Some of its members had been warned at an earlier call-in, they didn’t listen, and now an example was being made of them. But, unlike the Vortex unit’s zero-tolerance strikes of two years earlier, which enraged the community and provoked widespread criticism of the police, the Northside Taliband roundup used social-network-analysis software to identify and target only key players in the gang. The software, which can be used to map interpersonal dynamics in anything from business organizations to infectious-disease outbreaks and terrorist groups, represents people as nodes and assigns numeric values to their connectedness. If Joe knows Peter and Peter knows Bob, then the link between Joe and Peter gets a value of two; the connection between Joe and Bob gets a one. “The guiding theoretical principle is that the nodes that are more central in the network have certain advantages over other nodes, which enables us to predict that they will perform better than others,” Steve Borgatti, a professor at the University of Kentucky who created the software, explained to me.

As in the earlier gang audits, the University of Cincinnati researchers collected information from the cops, but this time they focussed on relationships between individuals in one gang, rather than on connections between gangs. Engel’s group asked questions like “Where do this one’s friends live? Who was with him in the car when he was arrested? Who bailed him out of jail?” Using this information, they were able to identify the central nodes of the Northside Taliband, whose removal would severely damage the gang’s structure.

In order to affect all the smaller so-

cial networks within the Northside Taliband group, which numbered ninety-six members, the cops needed to arrest twenty-five men, who were identified by name, and by photograph. Their pictures, along with their positions in their social networks, were displayed on screens in police cruisers (cops could click a tab to see a suspect’s tattoos); ultimately, the police were able to arrest all twenty-five. The prosecutors on the C.I.R.V. team expedited their indictments; three had already been indicted under federal drug and weapons charges, and were facing long prison sentences. Other members of the Northside Taliband were so impressed by the cops’ precision that they had started turning themselves in, hoping to make a deal while there was still time. So many were showing up at district headquarters, Streicher told Kennedy, that the cops had to put a sign-up sheet at the desk.

As a policing tool, Kennedy’s methodology had been a big success in Cincinnati. In 2008, murder was down over all, arrests had declined, and morale in the department was high. (The murder count was up slightly in the first quarter of 2009, but was still significantly lower than comparable periods in 2006 and 2007.) Whalen had experienced his own personal transformation: “We will never engage in this kind of gang work again without academic support,” he told me fervently. “No police department should.” The initiative had also been a public-relations coup for the cops; the media coverage of the Northside Taliband strike had been very favorable—in contrast with the reception that the Vortex unit had got in 2006. In November, during the Northside Taliband crackdown, Gerard and other members of his unit attended a community-board meeting in the Northside and received a standing ovation.

The social-services piece of Ceasefire has been less successful. More than three hundred and fifty people have called the C.I.R.V. phone number, seeking help and employment—far more than the service providers can find jobs for. A hundred got jobs, but only fifty-three of them remain employed. C.I.R.V. did persuade the city to change its policy of not hiring convicted felons, and three were placed in low-level city jobs; one of those men sub-

sequently failed the mandated regular drug tests. Cincinnati is a center of the health-care industry, and Victor Garcia had hoped to persuade some companies that do contract work in the city’s health-care sector to hire convicted felons, but he has had no success.

Garcia has grown disenchanted with what he sees as Kennedy’s over-emphasis on the deterrence component of Ceasefire, which he believes comes at the expense of the program’s social-service aspect. “I’d like it to do more to save the kids on the street,” he told me, with some frustration, in January. When I mentioned that to Kennedy, he said tersely, “Look, we would all like to save everyone, but we can’t. We don’t know how to do that yet, and Ceasefire is fundamentally about what can be done. It’s engineering, not evangelism.” In May, Garcia was dismissed from the Ceasefire team.

Dante Ingram, who was also at the courthouse that day, lost his job in phone sales in December, 2008, when he was arrested in a domestic-violence incident and spent eighteen days in jail and twenty days under house arrest. After that, C.I.R.V. managed to place him in another job, in the receiving department of a warehouse. Ingram was unable to hold that position, either, and was considering returning to the gang. Despite Ingram’s difficulties, Stan Ross, who was impressed by his determination to change his life, offered him a job as a C.I.R.V. street worker. “I love it,” Ingram said of his work. So far, he had found jobs for two other men, one in a gas station and one as a janitor. Among his new duties is making sure that these men get to work on time, and he sometimes takes them and picks them up himself. “A lot of these guys have never had a job before,” Ingram said.

Streicher told Kennedy that he had found employment for one young man himself. The man had approached the Chief after an earlier call-in, saying that he wanted to get out of the gang, but he had a felony conviction and doubted he could get a job. “I’ll get you a job,” Streicher said. “You want to be a roofer? My friend can get you on a roof tomorrow.” The man accepted, and, so far, he has been gainfully employed.

As the Chief walked away, Kennedy shook his head in disbelief and said, “That’s not the Tom Streicher I knew two years ago.” ♦