

Commuter criminals involved in many killings, most crime in Tenderloin

▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

out of bounds, though Tenderloin cops often respond first to these scenes.

Tenderloin figures pale next to Bayview, which last year had 14 homicides but arrests for only one. Five other districts had more homicides than the Tenderloin.

"But my biggest fear," Garrity said, "is that somebody going to a store, or to a nonprofit, or a kid walking on the street, will catch a bullet."

There has been blood. Eric Lindsay, 52, was being pushed in a wheelchair by his fiancée on his way to buy a pizza at 7:45 p.m. Aug. 3, 2006, when he was suddenly in the middle of a botched drug transaction that turned violent in the 400 block of O'Farrell Street. He caught a bullet in the chest and died.

On April 18, 2007, after midnight on the crime-ridden 300 block of Ellis Street, Lena Allen, a 54-year-old, recent Sixth Street hotel resident, became another innocent victim of a gun battle. Police said Walter Simon, 32, of Richmond was on the block returning gunfire when his rounds killed Allen. Simon, who police said had a rap sheet for drug dealing and weapons possession in the Tenderloin, was in a wheelchair, himself a victim of a shooting.

And there are other wild situations that could have easily meant curtains for a bystander. The afternoon before Allen's death, at 4:20, seven blocks away in what police called a gang execution, 16-year-old Kelvin Mencia of Oakland was chased to a donut shop at Golden Gate Avenue and Hyde Street, where a fight broke out. He was gunned down. Police arrested five suspects, four of them juveniles.

Drive-bys, because of their recklessness, are another source of fear, though the Tenderloin is nothing like the Bayview scene. So Tenderloin residents are still talking about the shooting two years ago near Grand Liquor Store where small crowds gathered out front day and night.

On Feb. 23, 2009, at 10:20 p.m. a silver Mercedes-Benz SUV with temporary license plates was traveling

west on Turk. As it approached Taylor Street, gunshots poured out of the vehicle, wounding five men and killing Leticia Hunter, 33, from Sacramento, who was believed to be part of a drug deal. The Mercedes sped off, chased by San Francisco police, who said the SUV hit 110 mph going over the Bay Bridge. Police lost the vehicle in Oakland, where it was discovered three hours later, abandoned and burning.

The Tenderloin's historic bad reputation is its albatross. It's where poor people and addicts hang out and where criminals and misfits gravitate for drug transactions. It's a Jekyll and Hyde neighborhood, the city's poorest, with scores of historic, well-kept hotels and other buildings. Hardworking Latino and Asian families co-exist with a grungy, poverty-stricken underclass seeking soup kitchens and detox centers. Mental health patients find help from a plethora of nonprofits; a high percentage of parolees and ex-cons tries to rejoin the law-abiding, and tempers flare. Anything can happen, cops say, in the neighborhood that "never sleeps."

One man, accused of killing another at U.N. Plaza in front of Carl's Jr. by clobbering him over the head with a boom box, was sent to Napa State Hospital. A police in May 2010 found Edward Holloway, 55, incapable of helping in his own defense. The year before, Holloway had been arrested for stabbing his girlfriend in an argument over \$30 at Turk and Taylor.

That is as unnerving as the sometimes homicidal terror of gangs.

It would seem that the Tenderloin drew Joveon Bowen of Oakland. He was convicted of first-degree murder in February 2010, eight years after the slaying of a 26-year-old man walking near Polk and Willow streets at the edge of the Tenderloin. Police believe the deed was a rite in Oakland's notorious Nut Case gang to gain prestige. Another man who had driven across the Bay Bridge with Bowen had been convicted three years earlier of the killing, but gang members ratted out Bowen as an accomplice.

All of this begs the question, jilted by the trend, who's getting killed in the Tenderloin? The Extra asked the Police Department to find which homicide victims

over the past five years lived in the Tenderloin police district. The Extra's total for that period, 29, came from an analysis of department figures. Sgt. Michael Andrechak, in public relations, said his total for this search might be different. It was, 27. Further analysis showed that missing from the SFPD was one of the three homicides of 2010 and one from 2008.

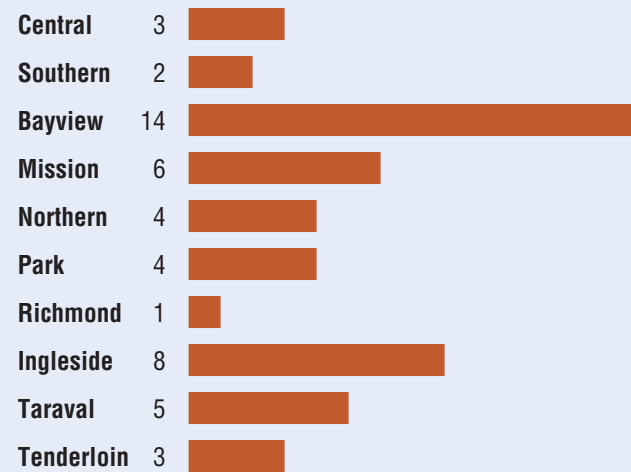
The search results showed 12 victims were from the Tenderloin, four were homeless but tied to the TL, and nine were out of the district, the majority from towns ranging from Vacaville to Santa Cruz. Two of the victims police said were Tenderloin residents had been identified in newspaper accounts, based on police reports, as from Sacramento and Oakland. In 2007, five of the nine victims were from out of town. So people are coming to the neighborhood to kill and some get killed.

Clearly, out-of-towners waging war-bent crime in the Tenderloin is a wicked problem that looks unstoppable. It rankled and frustrated Capt. Gary Jimenez no end. He was Tenderloin captain from 2006 to 2009, the longest stretch any captain has served in the TL. He is now the department's night supervising captain for the city.

"It has long, long been a trend," Jimenez told the Extra. "The best place in California to commit a crime is

2010 homicides

The number of killings last year in the city's 10 police districts



Source: SFPD

in San Francisco. The system is less likely to prosecute you. It's almost against sending you to jail, especially if it involves drugs. It's the revolving door here."

Jimenez got into hot water three years ago announcing at his monthly community police meetings that commuter criminals were causing the vast majority of crime in the neighborhood and then naming their communities. It was like he was "pointing a finger," elsewhere, he was told; he wouldn't name the superior who told him to stop.

Even so, two volunteers, Dina Hilliard and Elaine Zamora, examined the station's April 2009 arrest logs to see if the claim could be substantiated. Hilliard said in an interview that the results showed that 83% of the arrests were people from out of the district, and 17% were Tenderloin residents. Half of those from out of town were from Oakland, she said.

More often than not, Jimenez said, dealers are armed and on parole. "Search the car," he said, "and you'll find a weapon, or someone is carrying it for him. They carry arms because of the threat to them — violence is a reality in that business. And some of the gangs in the 300 block of Ellis are vicious."

On Jimenez's watch, the Pink Diamonds strip club

at 220 Jones St. was "an ugly battle" that eventually led to a homicide that police connected to it. There were unruly crowds outside late at night, fighting and gunshots. The enraged neighborhood held community meetings to pressure the manager to control the lines. Police shut the club down briefly at times after inspections found permit violations. But the club persisted. One man police tied to the club crowd was shot and paralyzed. Another, on June 27, 2009, was shot and killed.

"It was the city that had refused to act on it," Jimenez recalled, "not the police."

But finally the city attorney moved in September 2009 to shutter the club and a Superior Court judge in October ordered Pink Diamonds closed, citing its 230 police service calls in the previous six months.

"It could very easily happen again with that kind of venue, if it's not well-managed," Jimenez said. "In the old days it wouldn't happen because a captain could close it. But City Hall is fickle."

Solutions to stem future violence are hard to come by. Garrity is working with his police community advisory board on a plan to post signs in order to expand the use of stay-away orders for loitering drug dealers.

But Jimenez says a bigger swipe at the problem, and maybe the ultimate solution, is a long way off.

"Legalize drugs," he said. "It's going to have to happen — maybe not for 100 years — but it's the only way to change it." ■

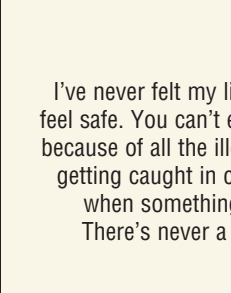


Has your life ever been threatened in the Tenderloin?

Asked of Tenderloin residents at various Tenderloin locations



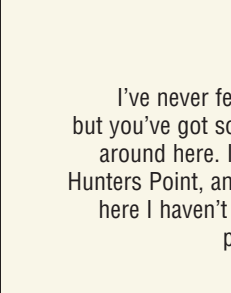
Roy S.
I was mugged once. They knocked me down and tried to get my wallet. There were three of them. I tried to run, but one of them got me and started kicking me. I was bleeding, but I managed to get into my apartment. I called 9-1-1, but it took half an hour before the cops came. It's dangerous down here at night. You see all these people dealing drugs. It's usually outsiders who cause problems.



Sherice S.
I've never felt my life was at risk, but I don't feel safe. You can't even get down the streets because of all the illegal actions. I'm afraid of getting caught in crossfire. I never know when something's going to happen here. There's never a dull moment — instead of 24/7, it's 25/8.



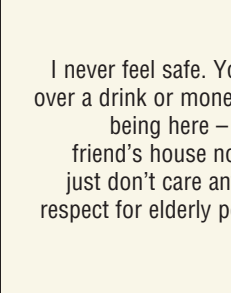
Natasha Sims-Captain
I don't live here, but I work here and I've never felt my life was at risk. I feel safe — I specifically wanted to come here to work. I walk around with my purse and both cell phones, and I don't feel any threat. I feel safer here than I do in Oakland.



Larry G.
I've never felt my life was threatened, but you've got some crazy people running around here. I come from the Bayview-Hunters Point, and I haven't seen anything here I haven't seen before. I think older people are at risk, though.



Rose R.
I do find people who are rude to those of us in wheelchairs, but as far as safety, I've never felt threatened. In fact, once people get used to seeing you sitting out here, they actually look out for you.



Barbara P.
I never feel safe. You see people get jumped over a drink or money, get robbed. I'm scared being here — that's why I'm going to a friend's house now. It's ridiculous. People just don't care anymore. They've got some respect for elderly people, but they don't care about your sex.



Leslie L.
I got my teeth knocked out in the middle of the street when someone tried to rob me. I also had an abusive boyfriend. We were together a couple of years, and he was fine until he did too many drugs — then he transformed into a delusional psychotic. It's a miracle I'm still alive, and I'm grateful. The upside is that even though I'm not fond of the police, they've been stepping up their presence. We've had a lot less knifings and shootings.

Tenderloin kids learn importance of having a job you love

▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Mexico City, worked in the hotel industry after high school, then went to college to become a translator. She later got a break when a big TV station offered to train her as a reporter and program hostess.

"Then I found what made me passionate in life," she said. "Sometimes you don't know. But you need to give your best." She is married to Cuban-born District Attorney George Gascon, the former police chief, and has been in the Bay area about a year. In January, she began hosting Univision's Spanish-speaking weekday morning programs on Channels 14 and 20.

Two panelists, one an assistant district attorney

working with the juvenile division, the other a final-year law student, said when they were kids people told them they should be lawyers because they liked to argue. The Hastings Law School student, Deanna Dyer, was out of school two years after getting a degree, then came back to go to law school.

"Take things slowly," Dyer cautioned. "You don't need to know the answers to everything. Take baby steps."

Bolden-Monifa also gave advice to ease the psychological burden of wanting too much too fast.

"Don't be concerned about what the audience is now," Bolden-Monifa advised. "It's communication you want to refine as much as you can."

Panelists on other nights echoed the advice, especially innovative computer programmers, engineers and technicians who are comfortably absorbed and isolated at their computer screens. They must be able to clearly explain their ideas to collaborators and other co-workers. One programmer, Andy Choi, who as a youngster had spent eight hours a day playing video games, said he was once an introvert who "didn't like to talk" but overcame that barrier.

"A couple of years ago I wouldn't have believed that I'd be talking to a roomful of 30 people," he said.

Generally the panelists encouraged going to college. Technical jobs require a degree. College is also a place to explore topics of interest, one of which may become the road to follow. And despite the cost — one

panelist still owed \$20,000 for loans that got him through USF — "you have to weigh what you want to do," Bolden-Monifa said, and do the work your goal demands.

One young lady in the audience at the second session was about to graduate from college, wanted to be a teacher and asked what she needed to do.

Orpheus S.L. Crutchfield had the answers. Crutchfield, a Berkeley educator with his own business, "teaches teachers how to teach," he said in his introduction. He has taught, coached school administrators on how to support cultural diversity and has trained teachers in three foreign countries.

You can teach in public schools, which are 90% of the nation's schools, or private ones, he told her. Public schools require a teaching credential, private schools don't, but they look favorably on expanded qualifications and specialties, he said. Substitute teaching doesn't require a credential. "And some college kids are getting paid to teach in middle schools, now," Crutchfield said. "I can hook you up."

The happy student said she had learned more in 10 minutes than she had from her school.

But going to college isn't the only way to find your way. Dennis Lee, 32, worked in his mother's Korean restaurant before getting a job "outside the family," only to discover he didn't like taking orders from somebody else. He wanted his own business, but realized he needed experience. Then he did a clever thing: He applied for jobs only at places he greatly admired, and he watched the way the best people worked. Now he has his own restaurant, Namu, at 439 Balboa St., and a stall at the Ferry Building Farmers' Market.

He and actor-painter Shores Alaudini, 26, emphasized the value of self-discovery and showing their passion through their work.

"I didn't go to culinary school," said Lee. "I didn't finish school. I had trouble making the commitments, but I focused on learning through experience. I think if you apply yourself to life, and are truthful to who you are, you are getting an education."

Asked what he liked to cook, he said "Korean food," then changed it to, "anything, really, as long as

someone is there to eat it."

The kids at once saw an opportunity for their Y classes.

"Will you be a guest chef at our cooking class?" they asked.

Yes, he said, and Alaudini agreed to come to their art class.

At every session the kids wanted to know if the panelists liked their jobs. Only one panelist wavered, but only for a moment. Alaaeddine Sahibi, a Moroccan-born corporation lawyer who moved to Los Angeles when he was 10, said at the March 23 session that he works on mergers and buyouts and with venture capitalists. Mounds of paperwork can be boring, he said.

"At times I do enjoy it when it makes the news and I can see, yes, I was involved with the transaction, that's exciting. And the perks are worth it, flying all around the world, everything paid for."

A 14-year-old boy wanted to know what the panelists were doing when they were 14.

Becky Schweighardt, a scientist who did HIV research for 20 years, said her early years as "a department store clerk without any high aspirations" were "not so good." Choi, serving on his second panel, said, "High school was hard to figure out."

Sahibi laughed at his own recollection. "I wanted to be the coolest guy on the planet," he said. "I don't believe it." But after high school, faced with finding a job, enlisting in the armed forces or going to junior college, he chose the latter and said it changed his life forever. Sahibi said his salary is well into six figures. He is 29.

Allen Ellison, an Adobe technology and software designer from Missouri, seemed to be the only one destined for a successful career at 14. Even as he struggled with school because his family kept moving, he was a computer whiz. He went to the local electronics store and offered to create games their customers could play in the store. In exchange, he got to play on their computer all day. That year, too, he and another kid started their own company, selling kits of software bundled on computers. It soon "dissolved," he says,

"If you apply yourself to life, and are truthful to who you are, you are getting an education."

Dennis Lee
RESTAURATEUR



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Kids after the third session sought even more comments from Lawyer Alaaeddine Sahibi (left) and Adobe's Andy Choi.