

Rapes spike in the Tenderloin where violence is a way of life

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reported, according to the Rape Abuse & Incest National Network.

The number of rapes in San Francisco is well below a national average that has been declining steadily since 1992, according to the FBI Web site, which shows 152 rapes in the city in 2004. The SFPD, which furnishes its figures to the FBI, reported 203. The difference, Siragusa explained, is because the FBI only counts rapes that are prosecuted. In 2005, San Francisco police reported 208 with 65 "cleared," or dropped.

Eighty percent of the TL victims "knew their attackers," Capt. Brown said, when presenting the neighborhood's annual crime figures to the Police Commission.

"Most rapes happen in hotels, in crack deals gone sideways," Capt. Brown said later in an interview.

TL rape victims are often treated at the San Francisco Trauma Recovery and Rape Treatment Center at S.F. General. The center sees about one case a day, roughly "350 cases per year," according to nurse practitioner Ann Brennan. "Many are from the TL but I don't know the percentage."

"I've seen an increase in the number of drug-facilitated rapes," Brennan said. "They happen after someone's been rendered unconscious, and that could also mean a loss of memory. The No. 1 rape drug continues to be alcohol."

VIOLENCE 'PART OF THE VIBE'

Tenderloin AIDS Resource Center occupies a blue, two-story building with lots of windows next door to St. Boniface Church. It locks its doors for lunch, a time when the sound of church bells echoes along Golden Gate Avenue.

On a day in April, two women were working at the reception desk, on it a wilted red rose in a plastic bottle. Next to the rose is a yellow orchid. To the receptionists' left is the Pharmacy, a large room where people are seated on blue plastic chairs waiting for their prescriptions to be filled.

Upstairs is Perri Sranskovich's small office, where a large print of Matisse in Morocco hangs on one wall. Sranskovich is the psychologist who oversees TARC's mental health team. TARC serves 300-400 people a day,

Sranskovich says, many of them homeless. She estimates 30%-50% of TARC's clients, including men and women, have been raped or sexually abused.

"The rate at TARC is larger than the general population," she says. "We're dealing with people who've been disenfranchised from the main population in the city."

Her work as a psychologist has taken her to just about every SRO in the Tenderloin. Many rapes, she says, occur in SROs, particularly ones that aren't properly managed.

"What strikes me is the high level of sexual assault and sexual predation that a lot of people live with in the TL," she says. "It's part of the vibe. People manipulate and exploit each other here. It's partly how they survive."

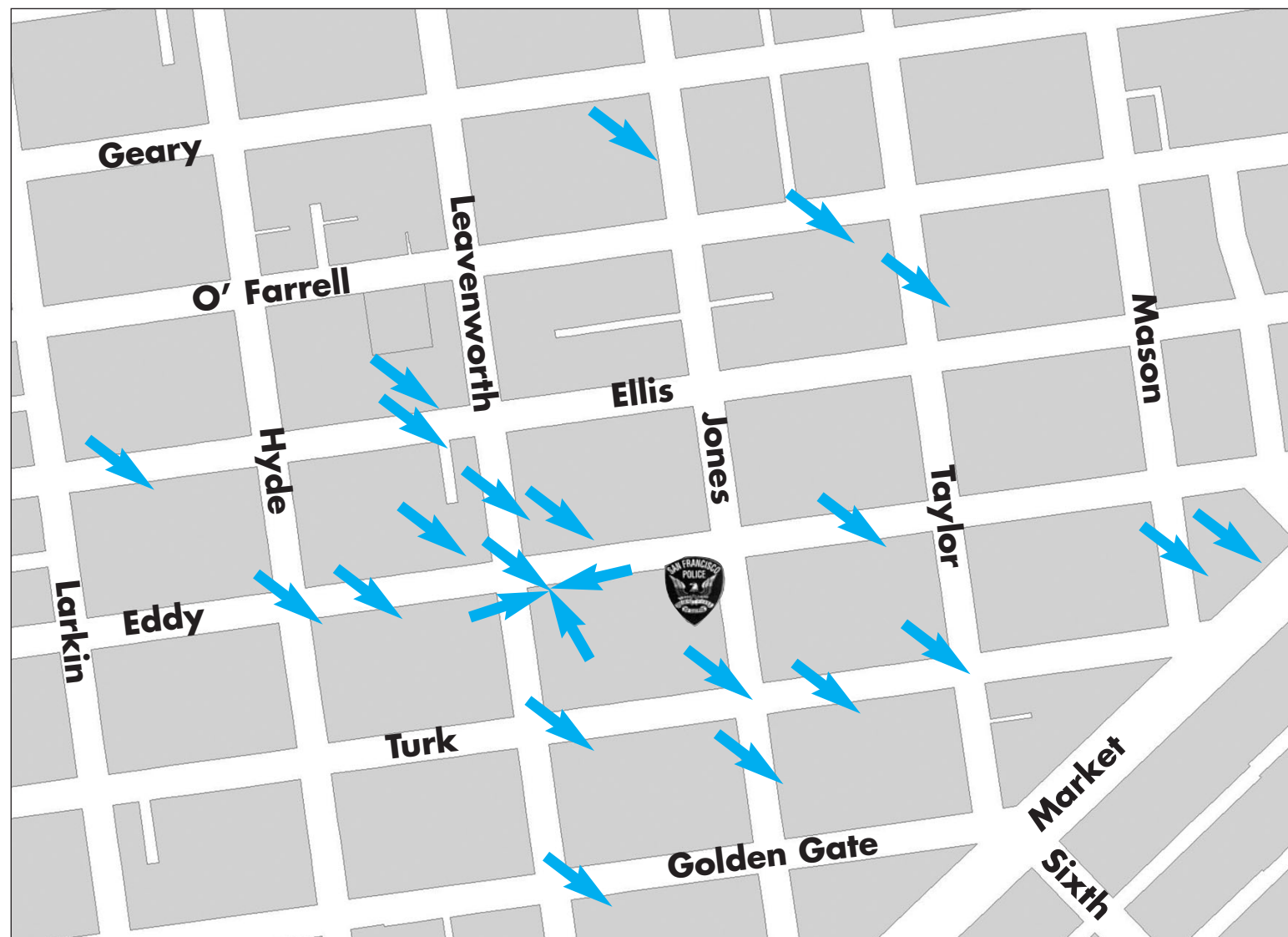
"There is so much violence down here, and violence on so many different levels," she says. "The vibrations that sets up has an impact. So, for folks who've been raped here in the TL, they're going to be constantly triggered by all of the violence that takes place — and the threats that exist on a daily basis on the streets."

She offers a pragmatic psychologist's solution to ease the rape and other violence:

"There are powerful forces out there on the sidewalks, and if you want to permeate the dynamics, the violence, the low self-esteem,

the degradation, you need to go out and meet it. It's not enough to just have your agency located here. You actually have to go out on the street and have a presence."

Until things change, the sidewalk rules reign. A random encounter between this reporter and a homeless woman documents that reality.



SOURCE: SFPD INCIDENT DETAIL REPORTS

MAP: THE EXTRA

This map shows the location of 24 rapes in the Tenderloin in 2004 and 2005. TL police Capt. Kathryn Brown reported 29 rapes in that period, but the Extra was unable to get addresses for five of the incidents.

ON-THE-STREET INTERVIEW

Eva is standing on the corner of Taylor and Ellis. Her hair is light brown and stringy, her face pale and weather-beaten, her eyes a washed-out blue. She's wearing dirty white pants and a shabby gray sweater. She looks beat.

I ask if I can interview her about women and safety in the TL; she asks me for a dollar, which I give her. She tells me her name is Eva, says she is 46 but looks to be in her late 50s. She says she's from Roanoke, Va., and has lived in San Francisco 20 years.

Are you single or married?

Single.

Do you live in the TL?

Yes.

Are you homeless?

Yes.

Have you ever been sexually abused or raped here in the TL?

Yes.

Did you know the person?

Yes.

When did it happen?

The whole time I've been here.

Nonprofit staff surprised by rapes at the Hamlin

THE fact that four rape incidents over two years had occurred in the Hamlin Hotel at 385 Eddy St., owned by the nonprofit Chinatown Community Development Center, came as a surprise to the Rev. Norman Fong, program director.

"We didn't know of any rapes happening inside the hotel," Fong said, though police reports say two rape incidents occurred in a single room on the sixth floor, a forcible rape Aug. 26 at 7:10 p.m. and an attempted rape Nov. 22 at 2 a.m. "I heard there was an incident that happened outside. And that rape happened at another hotel, not the Hamlin."

CCDC has owned the Hamlin since 1992. The six-story, 86-room SRO is worth just over \$1 million, according to the assessor's office.

Hamlin Director of Property Management Aleta Dwyer-Carpenter said no rapes had been reported to the hotel management, but she did not disbelieve the police reports. The sixth-floor tenant has lived there since 1995 and has good relations with the Hamlin staff, she said.

"It's kind of like lightning striking twice in the same place," she said, referring to the two incidents in the same room. "You have to ask yourself, what's going on here? People don't always make the best choices. And when alcohol and drugs are involved ... and I don't know if that was the situation. I wasn't there in the room. I'm aware of the police reports that are alleged. The people are still there in the building. They haven't moved out of the building. Both incidents involved people, men, who they knew. It's not like a case where a stranger is walking down the street and just randomly picked someone," she said.

The hotel has a screening process for all visitors, Dwyer-Carpenter explained. Each must sign in with the desk clerk, leave a photo ID and then is escorted up to the room.

"We have to account for everyone in the building," she said. "We have an 86 list for people who the tenants don't want to come into the building." ■

— JOHN GOINS

RAPE STATS: GO FIGURE

Why SFPD crime reports can be deceiving

SFPD statistics for Tenderloin rapes in 2005 and 2004 differ. TL police Capt. Kathryn Brown reported to the Police Commission in March that rapes jumped from nine in 2004 to 20 last year. But the Sex Crimes Detail reported a spike from seven to 18 rapes.

A police statistician blames software difficulties for imprecise geo-coding addresses. Two cases each year could have ended up in another police district's figures, he said.

"Coding is always plus or minus," said David Makofsky, police statistician. "If the report isn't an exact address, or even a half block away, it can end up in another district."

"It's a real issue in crime mapping and it's software-related. There's not a lot we can do. The Tenderloin is small and has a lot of borders. If this was a big investigation (over rape) I'd look into it and go case by case."

Two years ago, while researching Sixth Street improvements, The Extra discovered a misleading police practice in reporting rapes when we investigated another mysterious crime spike. Forced rapes rose sharply in the Southern Station police district, and most of the crime scenes were attributed to police plot 258, which includes the Hall of Justice and several nearby bars and nightclubs.

No rapes were recorded for plot 258 in 2001, four in 2002, yet by October 2003, 15 showed up on the police crime map.

When The Extra tried to find the exact locations, the facts came out. The rapes had occurred elsewhere. Plot 258 was the city's slush spot for rapes. Whenever a rape was committed and the victim didn't know where she or he was, the "unknown address" report went to police headquarters at 850 Bryant, the home of Southern Station. There it was coded

into Southern's statistics.

"It (the rape) could have been in Golden Gate Park — which has no address — or in a car someplace, or the victim was disoriented," said Makofsky. "After those inquiries (by The Extra) we looked into our method of record-keeping."

Sgt. Tom Feledy, Makofsky's supervisor, said no solution was found.

"Our technical staff advised us it was not cost-effective to change the old system when we were in the process of implementing a new records management system that will not have this problem," he said in an e-mail to The Extra. The new system is to go in effect in 2007.

Southern Station reported 33 rapes last year and 35 in 2004, nearly twice as many as any other police district. ■

— TOM CARTER

Bessie Carmichael adds 7th grade starting September

BY TOM CARTER

SOMA'S seventh-grade students who have had to travel up to an hour to attend middle schools out of the neighborhood can go to Bessie Carmichael Elementary starting in the fall.

The change, voted by the Board of Education on May 9, is the latest in the decade-long struggle by parents to make the school K-8. District 6 has no public middle school.

SOUTHSIDE

"It's something the community really needs at this time," Jeffrey Burgos, Bessie principal, said in an interview. "Students are traveling great distances, as much as an hour, to get to a school. Finally, there will be a middle school, K-8, South of Market."

The new grade with about 60 students will occupy two wood bungalows on a new campus at 824 Harrison St., site of the Filipino Educational Center, three blocks from Bessie Carmichael at 375 Seventh St. The school's sixth grade, a pilot program in 2005-06, will move to the Harrison Street site in the fall, too. It will also occupy two bungalows, said spokeswoman Angelica Cabande of the South of Market Community Action Network, a nonprofit helping poor and immigrant families in the neighborhood.

"This was the dream of parents going back 10 years," Cabande said. The 440-pupil enrollment, K-6, is 59% Filipino. In 2005, SOMCAN and the parents surveyed fifth-grade parents and found that 90% wanted a sixth grade and, eventually, seventh and eighth grades. The school district will hire an assistant principal for the Harrison Street site, Cabande said, and when the eighth grade is added, the FEC building will be converted to classrooms. ■



PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

The new Bessie Carmichael school at 375 Seventh St.