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Female homicide victims, an alarming trend



Brittani Rice, left, and Senobia Brantley, who were shot to death Monday night after leaving work. | Facebook.

By Mary Mitchell

While top law enforcement officers are at each other's throats over the Cook County State's attorney's office [handling of the Jussie Smollett fiasco](#), a lot of people are getting away with murder.

That's a chilling thought.

Even worse, I'm beginning to suspect that some of the shootings involving young black women are not as random as they appear.

Last week, [two women were shot to death after leaving work at a Walmart](#) in Greater Grand Crossing.

The teenage girls were sitting in a car with a male teenager when three men jumped out of a blue sedan and opened fire.

Just like that Brittani Rice, 18, and Senobia Brantley, 19, were gone. The male was wounded. Although police don't think the shooting was gang-related, they believe the teens were targeted.

But what could have triggered such a deadly response?

Outside of domestic violence incidents, it used to be rare that women were the targets of street violence.

For instance, in 2013, 27 women in Cook County were homicide victims, 19 of them in Chicago. Four years later, the number of female homicide victims skyrocketed to 63 in Cook County, 52 of the homicides were in Chicago, according to the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office.

A couple of days after Rice and Brantley were murdered, another woman named Brittany — [Brittany Coleman, 29, — was killed in Rosemoor on the Far South Side](#).

Coleman was in the vehicle with her boyfriend, in the passenger seat, when someone fired shots. The boyfriend is not cooperating with investigators, police said.

He did, however, drop the critically wounded Coleman off at Roseland Community Hospital where she died.

What happened to Coleman is similar to what happened to Tykina Ali in 2016. [Ali, 20, was shot to death while riding in a vehicle](#) with her ex-boyfriend.

He told police someone pulled up on the right side of them and started shooting. Allegedly, the ex-boyfriend rode around for a couple of hours with the dying woman before taking her to West Suburban Hospital where she was pronounced DOA.

Ali's mother, [Adowa Watts](#), has waged an unsuccessful campaign to have the charges against the ex-boyfriend upgraded to second-degree murder.

Obviously, far more men are shot to death in our city.

Still, it was distressing to read that in [February](#), [Elisa Corona Vargas was found dead of multiple gunshot wounds on a sidewalk](#) in Austin, and no one is in custody.

Last month, the Chicago Police Department announced a 44 percent decline in homicides and a 24 percent reduction in shootings compared to the same time last year.

That's encouraging.

But those statistics don't tell the whole story.

There are days when it feels as if there is a deliberate assault on women.

The gunfire that tore through [a gathering for a baby shower in Englewood on Saturday](#) is an example of what I'm talking about.

The shooter had to have known the crowd would be mostly women and children.

An 8-year-old boy and a 10-year-old girl, and a 29-year-old woman were among the six people wounded.

The brazenness of this shooting shows the people who are committing these crimes don't fear getting caught.

That is one reason why some of us are having a difficult time swallowing State's Attorney Kim Foxx's approach to criminal justice reform.

People who break the law ought to be held accountable — from the disgraced former police Officer Jason Van Dyke, to TV star Smollett. Frankly, it is unfortunate that someone who allegedly faked a hate crime for his own benefit is now at the heart of a controversy that pits white and black law enforcement chiefs against each other.

It is also troublesome that the Fraternal Order of Police has exacerbated the situation by taking a "no-confidence" vote in Foxx's leadership.

The people who need police protection the most aren't going to believe a word the FOP — an organization that has historically turned a blind eye to police misconduct — has to say about Foxx's leadership.

But this schism is just going to add to the tensions that already exist between police and communities of color that make it more difficult to hold the criminals accountable.

Sad.

So far this year, there have been 17 homicides of females in Cook County.

Is anyone even paying attention?

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