

opinion

MARGARET E. BUCHANAN
President and publisher

CAROLYN K. WASHBURN
Editor and vice president

DAVID HOLTHAUS
Editorial page editor

MURDERS DESERVE MORE THAN BRIEF ATTENTION



**PATRICIA
GALLAGHER
NEWBERRY**

Patricia Gallagher Newberry, an *Enquirer* reporter and editor from 1986 to 1994, teaches journalism at Miami University.

A man died in my neighborhood last week, shot in his apartment, dead just outside his door. A few months back, in June, two other men died just down the block – one in the park that sits between Kennedy Heights and Pleasant Ridge, the other just outside the park.

I didn't know any of the three. What I know of the latest victim – who lived on the street my family and I called home for more than seven years – I learned from news accounts and court records: Dannon Foreman, black male, 34, was the father of an 11-year-old, had a

record of minor criminal charges (some related to drugs) dating back to 1998, and had a mother and brother who provided sad and angry soundbites to reporters.

Here's what else I know: Foreman was the 63rd slaying in the city of Cincinnati this year, compared to 53 in all of 2012, 67 in 2011, 72 in 2010, 59 in 2009, 75 in 2008, 67 in 2007 and 88 in 2006. Here's what else: He, like most other people killed in our city, attracted attention for about 24 hours.

My neighborhood – Kennedy Heights for the last decade, after those seven years in Pleasant Ridge, just five minutes away – is working hard to combat crime in our midst. In the months since the Kennedy Park killings, local citizens have responded with a Play in the Park program, a Facebook page, peace vigils, marches and a group called Good Guys Loitering.

After Foreman's death, the Good Guys staged an event with neighbors, cops and even a few reporters and couple of politicians (thanks, Roxanne Qualls and Mi-

chelle Dillingham) showing up to stand up against violent crime.

And then? Life resumed. The police went back to other investigations, stymied by witnesses who run for cover. The politicians returned to their campaign and non-campaign priorities. The citizens went home, shaken by the crime and advice from friends and family to plant "For Sale" signs in their yards.

My fear: Disinterest and inertia have taken hold. We have grown used to having 50, 60 or more homicides in our city a year. We take comfort knowing we have nothing to do with drugs or gangs or any of the other factors that figure into most Cincinnati homicides. And God help us, we sometimes reason that drug thugs get what they deserve – dismissing the fact that a murder is murder, a life is a life, and violent crime in our midst strips away another sliver of our civility, diminishing us all.

With the myriad social issues that lead to violent crime – addiction, poverty, lack of education,

hopelessness and more – fixes are elusive.

But now seems like a pretty opportune time to return focus to the effort.

We've got a brand new police chief who says he'll fight urban crime by engaging youth with new options. Let's hold him to that.

Soon, we'll have a new mayor and City Council. Some are dedicated crime-fighters, but too few made combating murder central to their campaign. Let's ask them to move murder ahead of streetcars and parking garages.

And how about the media? Let's hold their feet to the fire, too. Murders – no matter the neighborhood, no matter the circumstances – deserve more than one-story coverage. Let's press them – along with the politicians and law enforcement officials – to keep the spotlight on this most violent and soul-sucking of crimes.

One slaying, down the street, is alarming. Sixty-plus demands community-wide attention and action. ■

READ AND SHARE OPINIONS



READ MANY MORE LETTERS: You may share your opinion in print and online. To comment online: Cincinnati.com/blogs/letters. Email letters to letters@enquirer.com, or send to Enquirer Opinions Page, 312 Elm St., Cincinnati, OH 45202; email is preferred. Include name, address, community and day phone. Letters may be edited for space and clarity, and may be published or distributed in print, electronic or other forms.

'READER ESSAYS' AND EXPERT

COLUMNS: Send your column of 300 words or fewer, with a photo and a sentence about yourself (community, occupation, etc.), to letters@enquirer.com, "Reader Essay" in the subject line.