

WHEN BLACK LIVES DON'T MATTER IN CHICAGO

by Carol Sebastian



My hometown, Chicago, experiences daily murderous violence. In the week ending June 20, 17 murders of African American Chicagoans included the deaths of a 3-year-old toddler and a 13-year-old girl. The 17 homicides in a week surpassed the number of unarmed blacks killed by police nationally in 2019.

The *Washington Post* database on police violence reported that in the US in 2019 a total of nine black men and one black woman were unarmed victims of a police killing. That number is very small compared with the 382 African American murder victims in Chicago in 2019, as reported in the *Chicago Sun-Times* database. The 365 black males and 17 black females murder victims comprised 75% of all Chicago homicide victims.

The *Sun-Times*' database recorded 290 Chicago homicides in the first 172 days of 2020 – more than one daily. Analysis of the database for the week of June 14-20, 2020 reveals the following:

- 25 murders were committed that week. All but one was a shooting (96%); one was a stabbing.
- Victims' age ranged from 3 years to 61 years, with the median age of 28. Three-year-old Mekay James was killed when a bullet, fired at the car in which he was riding, hit the little boy.
- 24 victims were male; the one female, Amaria Jones, age 13, was killed in her home by a stray bullet on the evening of Saturday, June 20.
- About two-thirds (68%) of the week's homicide victims were black, one was white, and seven were designated as "unknown" race.

The Bigger Picture

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) publishes mortality statistics for causes of death for the US. For male "non-Hispanic blacks" age 1 through 19 years, homicide is the leading cause of death (35.2% of all deaths of this age group). That is 6.8 times the rate for white males. For "non-Hispanic blacks" 20-44 years of age, homicide is the leading cause of death (28.9% of all deaths). This is 9.9 times higher for black males than for white males.

CDC reports homicide as the 4th leading cause of death for African American males in the US for *all ages*. The lifetime risk for African American males to die by homicide is 5.0%.

What a senseless loss of life. Will little Mekay James, or young Amaria Jones, become known to the nation? Do their black lives matter? Some black lives seem to matter less than others.

Why doesn't the city leadership seek help? Citizens of Chicago die by homicide nearly every day, mainly by gunfire.

Postscript

On June 27, a 22-month old African American boy, Sincere Gaston, was shot in the chest and killed in his car seat as his mother drove home from a laundromat. A 10-year old Native American girl, Lena Nunez, was shot in the head and killed by a stray bullet in her home. As of Monday, June 29, homicides in Chicago have risen to 319 in 2020.

Carol Sebastian is a nurse administrator in a Midwestern US town. She was born in Chicago, and lived in the area for 25 years. She attempts to apply Christian faith and Western tradition to current problems, and believes in reform rather than revolution.