

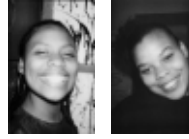
In Between The Lines:

## How The New York Times Frames Youth

*The New York City Youth Media Study* is a collaborative project between *We INTERRUPT This Message*, a national media training and strategy center, and *Youth Force*, a youth-led South Bronx organizing group. We partnered to publish a youth-conducted study of *The New York Times* by a group of South Bronx youth.

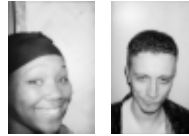
*Study Conducted By*

SHAQUESA ALEQUIN, 18, student at Arturo Schomburg Satellite Academy, Youth Force  
“Most people go through life fighting battles and never get heard. I am not to be silenced.”



LA'TOYA WARE, 16, student at Arturo Schomburg Satellite Academy, Youth Force  
“I am a very good/friend and my hand/will always be open.”

ERIKA FLORENCE, 17, student at Arturo Schomburg Satellite Academy, Youth Force  
“I am a strong black woman on the move in an upward spiral to success.”



JOSEPH VAZQUEZ, 18, student at Arturo Schomburg Satellite Academy, Youth Force  
“Strong, Spiritual, Poetic, Revolutionary Soldier.”

HAYDEN MEDOZA, 17, student at Arturo Schomburg Satellite Academy, Youth Force  
“Never Lose, Just Constantly Improve.”



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*Cover illustration by* HieroGraphiX Productions

## Introduction

### *What's in the News?*

Despite the 33% drop in juvenile crime since 1993, two-thirds of the American public believe that juvenile crime is still rising.<sup>1</sup> What is responsible for this misconception?

One powerful factor is the role of the news media. Between 1992 and 1996, as the national homicide rate (for youth and adults) fell 20%, coverage of youth homicide increased by 721% on three television network news programs.<sup>2</sup> It is true that homicide and other violent crimes might draw more coverage because the sensational sells, but the news media is also responsible for providing accurate accounts of our national and local realities. The media should be accountable for their unbalanced and inaccurate coverage.

### *In An Era of Zero Tolerance*

Young people currently face a slew of zero tolerance policies in courtrooms, classrooms, neighborhoods, and prisons. Between 1992 and 1997, legislatures in 47 states and the District of Columbia enacted laws that made it easier to transfer youth from the juvenile justice system to the criminal justice system—some granting all discretion for this move to prosecutors instead of judges.<sup>3</sup> The result is that the juvenile population in adult prisons has increased dramatically.<sup>4</sup> One tenet of zero tolerance policies is the transfer of youth to adult courts, which has led not only to a higher juvenile recidivism rate, but a quicker return to more serious offenses than those who are retained under juvenile jurisdiction.<sup>5</sup>

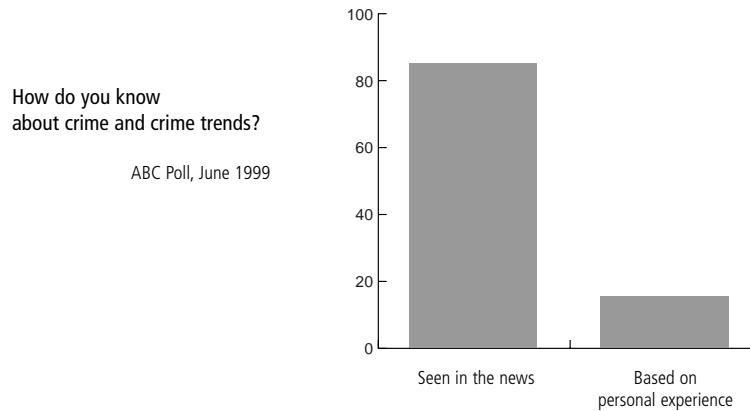
In December 1998, the New York City Board of Education transferred school security to the New York Police Department. School safety is now the responsibility of NYPD-trained security guards and armed police officers. This transfer took place without public hearings or other input from students, parents, teachers, principals, or other community representatives. School security is now policing behaviors (truancy, classroom conflict) that have long been left to parents and school administrators.<sup>6</sup> This is indicative of a nation-wide move to instate zero tolerance policies for juveniles. Youth of color are bearing the brunt of these punitive measures. The number of youth admitted to state prisons more than doubled between 1985 and 1997. And in

1997, 3 out of 4 youth admitted to state prisons were youth of color.<sup>7</sup>

### *The Role of the Media*

Among those who perceive a crime problem nationally, 82% say their assessment is based on crime reports they've seen in the news. Only 17% say it's based on their personal experience.<sup>8</sup> The connection between media-informed public opinion and public policy is a strong one, as policy-makers and voters work to initiate solutions to what they perceive to be social and political problems.

The Berkeley Media Studies Group suggests that standard "objective" reporting, which often excludes social, economic, and environmental contexts, leads readers to attribute the cause of an event to personal choice instead of acknowledging societal factors and considering solutions that address root causes.<sup>9</sup>



## Why We Chose to Examine *The New York Times*

By Hayden Mendoza

We undertook the task to critically examine *The New York Times* because we want to challenge media stereotypes of America's youth. The media (including television, radio, the Internet, magazines, and newspapers) often depict youth of color as violent, drug-abusing, gang-banging miscreants. That is a falsification that must be repudiated if we want to stem media criminalization of young people.

We did a study of *The New York Times* because we realize the influence of the news media on societal behavior. For instance, if someone opens up the *Times* to the weather report and sees that it's going to be 30 degrees, s/he will dress for 30-degree weather. Just as if someone reads an article about a young person robbing a store and doesn't read that youth crime is declining, s/he will begin looking at all young people as potential criminals. And picture crime stories about youth (without context) being printed or broadcast every day, multiple times a day. That is how we are negatively stereotyped. We all have stories about being followed in department stores when shopping or how adults clutch their stuff when we walk by. That is a direct result of the negative media portrayal of young people, especially young people of color.

Our personal experiences along with the knowledge of the crucial role that media plays in how we are portrayed and subsequently treated drove us to take up this study. We want to change biased coverage of young people in the media, using our study of *The New York Times* as a stepping stone.

## Who We Are and What We Did

By Joseph Vazquez

We are a team of nine youth from the South Bronx who decided to document how youth crime gets reported. As Youth Force members with the support of our own public high school, the Arturo Schomburg Satellite Academy, we set a goal to change the way media portrays youth in our society. We conducted a We Interrupt This Message-designed media study of *The New York Times's* coverage of youth and crime. Over a year-long program, we looked at the way youth, crime, and violence are reported in *The New York Times*.

It is imperative that we voice our side. We want respect!



## How The New York Times Frames Youth

### Summary of Findings

- 1. Youth Perpetrators Over-represented, Youth Victims Under-represented**

The *Times*' coverage over-represented youth as perpetrators and under-represented youth as victims, a picture opposite to that of reality—i.e. youth are much more often victims of crime, as opposed to being the perpetrators of crime.
- 2. The Myth of Rising School Violence**

School violence was over-represented, contributing to false impressions that school shootings and school violence are on the rise.
- 3. Invisible Causes and Trends**

The coverage rarely discussed causes and contributing factors to crimes involving youth and often omitted mention of societal factors such as poverty and gun availability. For instance, only 1 in 93 articles mentioned the 33% decline in youth crime since 1994.
- 4. Unexamined Solutions**

The only solution included in the coverage was incarceration, leaving alternatives to incarceration unnamed and unexamined.
- 5. One-sided Stories**

Police were the most frequently quoted source in the reporting of youth involved in or victims of criminal activity. Views from young people or their advocates were rare.
- 6. Differential Coverage Based on Race**

Coverage of youth perpetrators, where race is identifiable, differed between youth of color and white youth. Youth of color were portrayed less positively than white perpetrators in the pictures selected and sources quoted.

### METHODOLOGY

We chose a print outlet with national readership and a reputation for affecting public policy. We also wanted to examine a paper at the heart of New York City, one of America's major media centers and the hometown of the youth organizers involved in the project. We chose *The New York Times*.

We examined three months, January through March 2000, of the *Times*' coverage of youth crime. Our criteria for selecting articles was that they covered a domestic crime involving youth as a perpetrator or victim, or discussed domestic juvenile crime trends or policies. Our definition of youth is a person 21 years old or younger. We clipped articles from the National Report of the A Section, and the B Section. (We did not examine editorials, letters to the editor, opinion-editorials or advertisements.)

We found 93 articles that we used in our analysis to develop findings and make recommendations.

## FINDINGS

### The Big Bad Wolf is Under 21?

*The New York Times* over-represented youth as perpetrators of crime and under-represented youth as victims of crime.

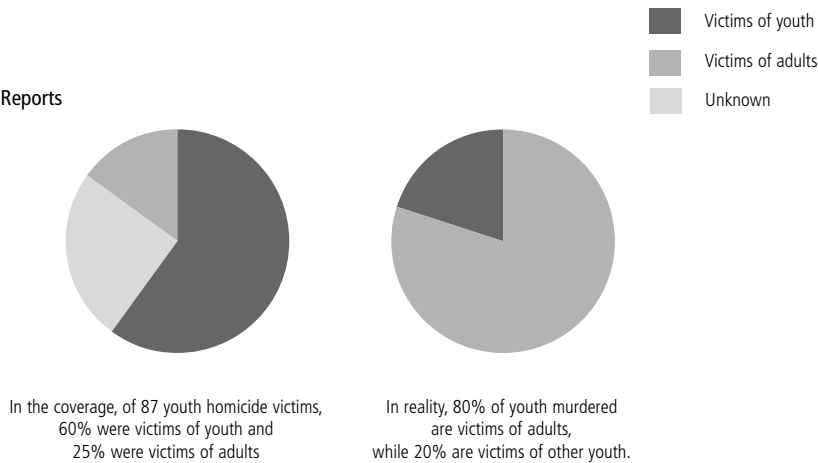
Comparing the number of youth perpetrators and youth victims leads to striking results. In 50 out of 93 articles (54%), youth appear primarily as perpetrators of a crime, while in 40 out of 93 articles (43%), youth appear primarily as the victims of a crime. 132 youth perpetrators appear in articles, compared to 117 youth victims. Although the coverage contained a higher incidence of youth perpetrators than youth victims, in reality, youth are much more often victims than they are perpetrators of crime, particularly violent crime. In 1996, youth victims accounted for 25% of all violent victimization while youth were responsible for perpetrating less than 2% of all violent victimization.<sup>10</sup> Also, less than one-half of one percent of all youth were charged with violent offenses in any year.<sup>11</sup>

*The New York Times* coverage of youth and

crime becomes more skewed as we examine the breakout of youth compared with adult perpetrators. 117 youth victims occurred in the coverage. Out of 109 instances where the perpetrator was known, 60 youth were victims of youth, while 49 youth were victims of adults. Out of 87 youth victims of homicide, 52 (60%) were victims of other youth and 22 (25%) were victims of adults. The FBI Uniform Crime Report indicates that the reality of youth homicide is almost directly opposite to the picture presented by the *Times*' coverage. The fact is that adults kill 80% of youth murdered, while only 20% of youth murdered are killed by another youth.<sup>12</sup>

Youth-on-youth crime was covered more frequently than adult-on-youth crime, even though adult-on-youth crime is more common. In several cases where the age of the youth perpetrator was newsworthy, for example the shooting by a six-year-old of a six-year-old in Flint, Michigan, the case

FBI's 1998 Uniform Crime Reports



And the greater context for crime involving youth is this: In 3 out of 4 cases, the Big Bad Wolves who murder youth are adults, not other youth.

received repeated coverage. In comparison, a story about a Detroit man who admitted to murdering two sets of his own wife and children (25 years apart)—a story which is also sensational—merited only one short column. *The New York Times* neglects to put crimes in context. And the greater context for crime involving youth is this: In 3 out of 4 cases, the Big Bad Wolves who murder youth are adults, not other youth.<sup>13</sup>

### The Myth of Rising School Violence

19 out of 93 articles (20%) reported on school shootings. The school shooting of Kayla Rolland by a classmate fell into the period of our sample. Like any school shooting, Kayla's death was an anomalous incident: American schools are overwhelmingly safe places for students. In fact, schools are no more dangerous now than they were in 1960's or 1970's.<sup>14</sup> Research conducted by the National School Safety Center reports that the number of students killed in school violence dropped by more than 50% between 1994 to 2000, and that only 23 students (under 21 years old) died in school violence during the 1998–99 school year, less than one-third the number of Americans (88) who were killed by lightning in 1996.<sup>15</sup> Although an American youth is more likely to be struck by lightning than shot in school,<sup>16</sup> not 1 of 19 articles referred to school shootings as a rarity, and none of the articles cited the drop in school-related violent deaths in the late 90's.

In total, 34 out of 93 articles (37%) reported an incidence of violence in school, 9 of these mention Columbine—one year after the fact. A USA Today Poll taken in post-Columbine 1999 found that 55% of people polled feared for their child's safety while at school, compared to 37% in a 1998 poll.<sup>17</sup> The Center for Disease Control reports that 99% of juvenile deaths occur outside of the school environment and that, in fact, the victimization of youth is 8 times more likely to occur at home than

in school.<sup>18</sup>

Beyond omitting the real statistics on the decline of school violence, the language of many articles concerning school shootings implied that school shootings are on the rise. One article states that “the first grader involved in (an) incident is the youngest involved in any of the multiple shootings at schools around the country over the last few years or other more random shootings in the last decade.”<sup>19</sup> As the nation's opinion-leading paper, *The New York Times* is responsible for publishing balanced coverage of local and national realities. By reporting school shootings without providing the necessary context that schools are safer for children than their own homes, the *Times'* coverage contributes to public misconception about the rate of violence in America's schools.

### Invisible Causes

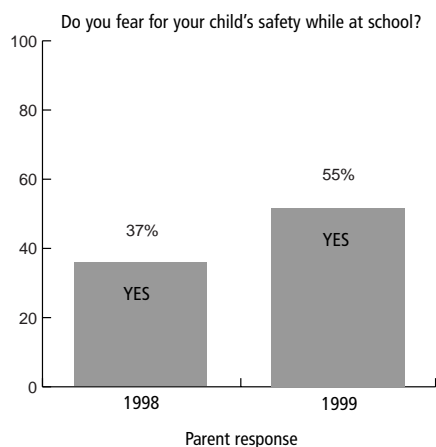
The reporting focused most frequently on the basic details of the crime—the incident, the suspect, the victim, the place—and lacked in frames that offered contexts or solutions. Problematically, coverage rarely examined what contributes to or causes crime, did not present any overall trends in youth crime, or examine the effectiveness of potential solutions to crimes involving youth.

Comprehensive reporting would include overall trends in the kind of crime being reported. The FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice report a 33% decline in youth perpetrated crime since 1994, yet, only 1 out of 93 articles in the *Times'* coverage even mentioned this trend.

The FBI and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention have documented that the most common characteristic of all perpetrators, young and old, is that of poverty. We believe poverty is a societal risk factor, associated with decreased access to quality education, employment opportunities, and other opportunities for economic advance-

The FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice report a 33% decline in youth perpetrated crime since 1994, yet, only 1 out of 93 articles in the *Times'* coverage even mentioned a decline in youth crime.

#### USA Today Poll 1999



ment. The social condition of poverty outweighs race, ethnicity, and gender as a common denominator in the background of perpetrators, including crimes involving youth. The relationship between crime and poverty provides an important context in examining effective solutions to crime, however, economic factors were largely absent in the *Times* coverage. Only 1 out of 93 articles examined mentioned a relationship between poverty and crime.

Another societal risk factor is the role of gun availability in crimes involving youth. Young Americans are 12 times more likely to be killed by gunfire than young people in 25 other industrialized societies.<sup>20</sup> This calls for an examination of how and why gun availability factors into gun crimes involving youth. Yet, although 36 out of 93 articles (39%) portrayed a crime involving a gun, only 1 article mentioned gun policy that impacts gun availability as a contributing factor.

Recent studies have documented the differential treatment of youth of color by law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system. According to the National Council for Crime and Delinquency, black youth with no prior record were six times more likely to be incarcerated than white youth with the same background for equiva-

lent crimes.<sup>21</sup> However, the differential treatment of juveniles based on race by the police and justice system was cited in only 6 out of 93 articles about crimes involving youth.

#### Unexamined Solutions

Comprehensive coverage would present and examine potential solutions to crimes involving youth. Yet, only 4 out of 93 articles examined a solution. All four examined the effectiveness of incarceration as a solution. Other community-based rehabilitative solutions, like Alternative Sentencing or Functional Family Therapy (a home-based strategy that has been shown to reduce recidivism rates of delinquent youth by 25 to 80% in repeated trials), were neither presented nor examined. These solutions, proven to be much less costly and much more effective in preventing future recidivism than prison, are supported by substantial juvenile justice research<sup>22</sup> and merit examination.

Without mention of alternatives to incarceration, *Times* readers are left with the impression that incarceration is the only effective solution. Of further concern, solutions that allow prosecutors to send juvenile cases to adult courts ignore the victimization of youth in adult prisons.<sup>23</sup> Compared with youth in the juvenile justice system, juvenile offenders in adult jails and prisons are eight times more likely to commit suicide, five times more likely to be sexually assaulted, twice as likely to be beaten by staff, and 50% more likely to be attacked with a weapon.<sup>24</sup>

Another unexamined and currently popular solution to juvenile delinquency is zero tolerance. Zero tolerance policies have become institutionalized in neighborhoods, schools, and justice systems across the country, factoring heavily into why and how youth are disciplined by American institutions. Despite this trend, only 2 out of 93 articles

Youth were indirectly quoted three times, while police, police officials, police lieutenants, and police investigators were indirectly quoted 135 times in the 93 articles examined.

mention zero tolerance policies as a potential factor in considering juvenile crime. And only 1 article out of 93 examines the effectiveness of Zero Tolerance policies in resolving juvenile crime.

Overall, few articles sought to examine, or even mention, the effectiveness of solutions for crimes involving youth.

### One-sided Stories

The storytellers, in articles on crimes involving youth, are most frequently the police. While youth were directly quoted 20 times in 93 articles, police were directly quoted 25 times in 93 articles. Also, almost half of the youth quotes are composed of white youth providing biographical information on a white perpetrator. (Please see discussion of differential coverage based on race in the next section.)

The more drastic finding is in the examination of indirect quotes, or instances where the reporter cites a source without using quotation marks. Youth were indirectly quoted three times, while police,

police officials, police lieutenants, and police investigators were indirectly quoted 135 times in the 93 articles examined.

### Differential Coverage Based on Race

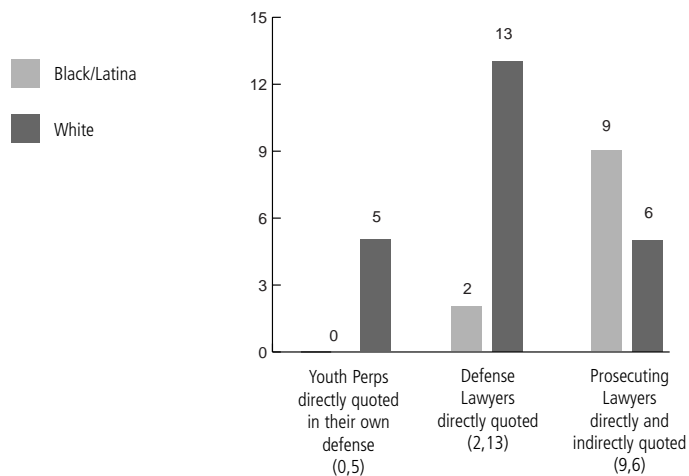
In the eleven articles where youth perpetrator's race is identifiable, we found significant differences in the coverage, related to the race of the perpetrator. Though the eleven articles provide a small sample, we found significant differences in the coverage between ten youth perpetrators of color and eight white youth perpetrators.

The black or Latino youth were never quoted directly, whereas the white youth were directly quoted in their own defense in five instances. One of the white youth perpetrators was even directly quoted in a headline.<sup>25</sup> The defense lawyers representing the black or Latino youth were directly quoted only twice, while the defense lawyers of the white youth perpetrators were directly quoted 13 times. Though the defense lawyers for the youth of color were not

often quoted, the prosecutors in their cases were quoted four times directly and five times indirectly. In comparison, the prosecuting lawyers of the white youth were quoted twice directly and four times indirectly.

Biographical information, such as mentioning family members or hobbies, allows the reader to identify with the alleged perpetrator. Thus the amount and type of biographical information printed is important to note. Though most of the youth perpetrators whose race was identifiable did not have

Sources of Quotes in articles where youth perpetrators are identifiable by race



more than one paragraph of biographical information printed, there were two who did. In one instance, a case in which a Latino teen basketball player was charged with assault,<sup>26</sup> the coverage did include more than one paragraph of biographical information—it included several paragraphs detailing his criminal history, his arrest record but provided no other biographical context. In another instance, that of a now-adult white perpetrator accused of a crime in his youth, several paragraphs of biographical information were printed—including information about his wife and children, his brother and father, his favorite sport, and his line of work. Clearly the content of the biographical information printed is important, and we must note here that the white perpetrator's was more complete and more positive.

Lastly, we examined the pictures used to visually portray the youth perpetrators identifiable by race. All of the white youth perpetrators pictured (5 out of 5) are pictured in suits and ties, or in a yearbook picture, and always outside of the courtroom. 2 out of 3 youth perpetrators of color pictured were courtroom shots. One of the black youth perpetrators is pictured in a courtroom, presumably after the verdict for his case had been read. The Latino youth perpetrator pictured is seated in a courtroom, bound by handcuffs and ankle chains.

Generally, we find that the differential coverage of black and Latino youth perpetrators in our sample from the *Times* mirrors the differential treatment from law enforcement agents and justice institutions experienced by youth of color nationwide. Youth of color are covered less favorably than their white counterparts, just as youth of color are more likely to be arrested, more likely to be tried as adults, and more likely to be incarcerated for equivalent crimes than their white counterparts.



A young Latino pictured in a courtroom with shackles on his hands and feet (from A12, 3/9/2000).



A young white male pictured in school setting (from B5, 3/5/2000)

## What We Want

- Meet with us to discuss our findings.
- Carry out the Recommendations presented in this study.
- Ensure that youth of color are represented fairly and accurately.
- Hire Youth Editors.
- Publish Youth Reporters.
- Create a YOUTH Desk for the 26% of the population in America that youth represent.
- Create a Positive News Section—cover youth that are doing good work as an everyday occurrence.
- Cover youth crime policies comprehensively and include where public representatives stand on these issues.
- Endorse an ongoing youth media accountability project in NYC.
- Provide funding to run our own youth newspaper—where we are the editors and reporters.
- Publish an op-ed we write about this study.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the articles in our sample, we make the following recommendations:

### 1. A More Balanced Portrayal of Youth Victims and Perpetrators

The *Times*' coverage of youth crime should reflect reality. Though some youth perpetrated crime does merit coverage, reporters should include the overall context of youth crime in such stories. Questions such as, Is this part of a trend? Has crime risen or fallen? Is this typical? should be answered to ensure that coverage does not lead to inaccurate conclusions. For instance, the coverage in this sample could have cited declines in youth crime and the role of adults in committing crimes against youth.

### 2. Stop Reinforcing the Myth that School-Related Violence Is Rising

Because many newsworthy crimes that are not indicative of national trends, the *Times* should mention the incident as out of the ordinary. School shootings and other school violence are not on the rise, thus *Times* coverage should note that such incidents are simply not a common occurrence in American schools. Reporters and editors should balance coverage of school-related violence by citing the research that demonstrates current trends in school violence.

### 3. Make Causes and Trends Visible

The *Times*' coverage of crimes involving youth does not often discuss how societal trends may affect juvenile crime. Coverage should more frequently mention potential causes and current trends, such as the decline in juvenile crime. Include societal risk factors such as poverty, gun availability, availability of alcohol, and differential treatment by the justice system in stories covering crimes involving youth.

# Why The New York Times Should Be Accountable to Us

Group Statement

## 4. Examine More Solutions

Few solutions were examined. The lack of solutions examined limits public understanding of how crimes involving youth might be decreased. The *Times* should examine the effectiveness of current public policy trends such as zero tolerance laws. It should also examine a wide range of other programs.

## 5. Give Voice to the Silenced

Police were often the only perspective offered in a crime story involving youth. More balanced reporting would include quotes of youth and youth advocates, particularly in articles that examine solutions to juvenile crime.

## 6. Balance the Coverage of Race

The *Times* should create criteria for providing information, including the visual representation of youth perpetrators. For example, “perp walk” or courtroom pictures could be used as a last resort, only when school or family related pictures are unavailable. Following a clear set of guidelines might enable the *Times* to avoid the racially biased trend against youth of color that we noted in this study.

Every story *The New York Times* prints, every editorial they write, and every photograph they publish is seen by millions of people. *The New York Times* wields power through the written word. When we read the newspaper, we take it for what we think it is—an objective view on the events of the day. We expect fair coverage. However, through our study we have found that *The New York Times* is biased in its reporting of youth crime. As young people of color who are directly effected by these biases, we demand accountability from *The New York Times*.

*The New York Times* should be accountable to young people of color, because as a result of their coverage we are being stereotyped and criminalized. *The New York Times* needs to take responsibility for the stereotypes they enforce through articles about youth of color and crime. These articles dehumanize us and our communities and do not analyze or report on the conditions of our lives. When newspapers like *The New York Times* focus only on the crimes young people are accused of committing, we are viewed as robbers, cheaters, and killers, which leads adults to treat us as though we all fit this profile. Our lives are sensationalized in the newspaper when we do something wrong. When we take positive action, there’s rarely a story to applaud our actions.

*The New York Times* should be held accountable by us, the youth, for making our lives tougher to live and for causing our elders to feel insecure and untrusting when they see us. These are the adults who create tougher laws everyday, because they mistakenly think we are committing more crimes. It’s time for *The New York Times* to report the truth about young people!

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>4</sup> Poe-Yamagata, Eileen and Jones, Michael A. National Council on Crime and Delinquency. *And Justice for Some*, April 2000: 5
- <sup>5</sup> Mendel, Richard A. “Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime, What Works—and What Doesn’t,” American Youth Policy Forum. pg. 39.
- <sup>6</sup> Youth Force, “Recommendations from Youth in the Juvenile Justice System.” NYC Budget FY 2000/1.
- <sup>7</sup> Poe-Yamagata, Eileen and Jones, Michael A. National Council on Crime and Delinquency. *And Justice for Some*, April 2000:24
- <sup>8</sup> ABC Poll, June 1999
- <sup>9</sup> Dorfman, Lori, DrPH and McManus, John, PhD. **Issue 9: Youth Violence in California Newspapers**. April 2000. pg. 7.
- <sup>10</sup> Sickmund, Melissa and Snyder, Howard. **Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report**. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. pg. 27/29/51
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- <sup>14</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. **Crime in the United States: 1998 Uniform Crime Reports**. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice. pg. 17.
- <sup>15</sup> Males, Mike. **Framing Youth**. Common Courage Press: 1999. pg. 260
- <sup>16</sup> Adapted from online Report: *School Associated Violent Deaths*. Westlake Village, CA: The National School Safety Center, August 1999. [www.nccs1.org](http://www.nccs1.org)
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- <sup>18</sup> USA Today, April 12, 1999
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- <sup>22</sup> Mendel, Richard A. “Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime, What Works—and What Doesn’t,” American Youth Policy Forum. pg. 2.
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- <sup>24</sup> Mendel, Richard A. “Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime, What Works—and What Doesn’t,” American Youth Policy Forum. pg. 3.
- <sup>25</sup> Herszenhorn, David. “Slain Girl’s Mother is Told, ‘You’ve Got the Wrong Guy’” *The New York Times*, Metro Section: B1, March 15, 2000.
- <sup>26</sup> Milloy, Ross E. “Basketball players foul draw a jail term,” *The New York Times*. Front Section: A12. March 9, 2000.

## Our Voices

### Who We Are – Group Statement

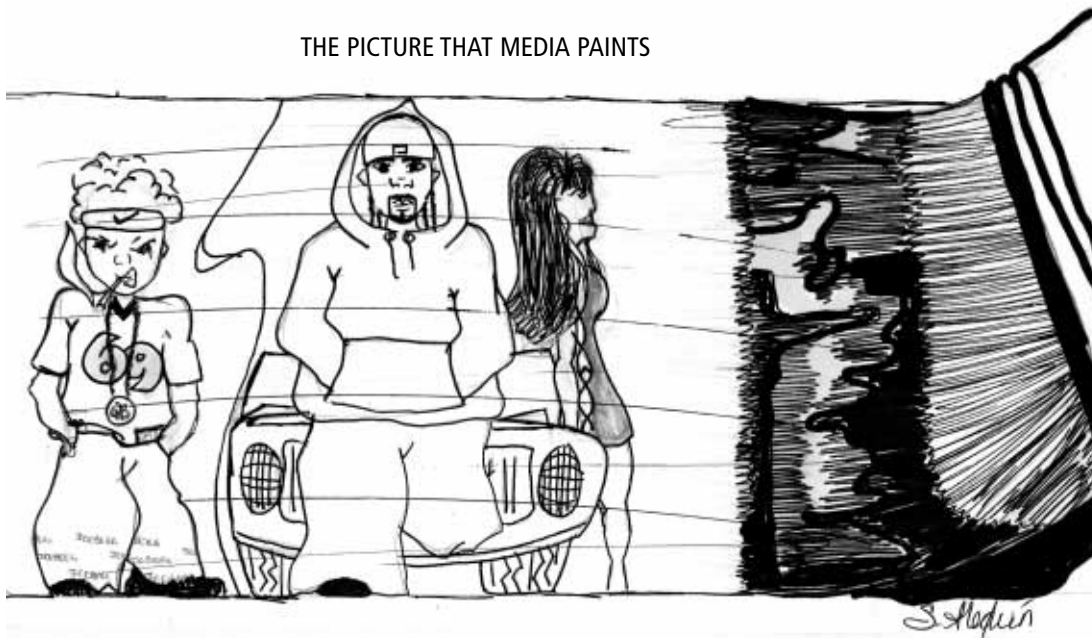
I am the opposite of everything society has tried to build me up to be.  
I am beautiful in spirit.  
I am an Irish brew with four leaves to my clover.  
I am a single mother who thinks about her child's future.  
I am the greatest.  
I am a good friend.  
I come from islands.  
Eye am a sovereign indigenous individual.  
I am the spawn of an explosion of people meant to be free.  
I am an important asset to my community.  
I am a force to be reckoned with.  
I am an organizer fighting for change in the South Bronx.  
I am those arroz y gandules that you eat while listening to the sound of a coqui singing "que bonita bandera, que bonita bandera."  
Eye am an artist by addiction and way of life.  
I am strong.  
I am a revolutionary.

### MY LIFE TIME

By La'Toya Ware

MY LIFE IS A GLASS THAT DOESN'T BREAK  
MY LIFE HAS ITS OWN WORLD WITH NO ONE TO SHARE WITH  
MY LIFE IS A GAME TO OTHER PEOPLE  
MY LIFE HAS NO WINDOW SO BREATHE SLOW  
MY LIFE IS A GUARD AROUND ME  
MY LIFE IS A CAVE WITH NO NOISE AROUND SO QUIET AND PEACEFUL  
MY LIFE IS FUN  
MY LIFE IS A BAD THING TO HANG AROUND WITH  
MY LIFE IS JUST ONE BIG MIX UP  
MY LIFE, MY LIFE, MY LIFE IT'S JUST DIFFERENT

### THE PICTURE THAT MEDIA PAINTS



*JOURNEY THROUGH MY EYES*

*By Joseph Vazquez*

*I'VE SEEN LOVE ON THIS JOURNEY THROUGH MY EYES.  
I'VE SEEN HATE ON THIS JOURNEY THROUGH MY EYES.  
I'VE SEEN DEATH ON THIS JOURNEY THROUGH MY EYES.  
I'VE SEEN LIFE ON THIS JOURNEY THROUGH MY EYES.  
I'VE SEEN MANY SKIES ON THIS JOURNEY THROUGH MY EYES.  
I'VE SEEN MANY SKIES, BUT THEY ALL ADD UP TO ONE ON THIS  
JOURNEY THROUGH MY EYES.  
I'VE SEEN TRIBULATION AND STRUGGLES ON THIS JOURNEY  
THROUGH MY EYES.  
I'VE SEEN OBSTACLES AND STRESS AND TESTS ON THIS JOURNEY  
THROUGH MY EYES.  
I'VE SEEN WAR ON THIS JOURNEY THROUGH MY EYES.  
I'VE SEEN PEACE ON THIS JOURNEY THROUGH MY EYES.  
I'VE SEEN THE DECEASED ON THIS JOURNEY THROUGH MY EYES.  
ON THIS JOURNEY THROUGH MY EYES I'VE SEEN IT ALL.  
FROM THINGS THAT ARE SMALL TO THINGS THAT STAND TALL.  
FROM THINGS THAT ARE GENTLE TO THINGS THAT JUST BRAWL.  
I'VE SEEN IT ALL ON THIS JOURNEY THROUGH MY EYES.  
DARE TO TAKE A LOOK THROUGH MY EYES?  
GO AHEAD.*

K.W.A.K.U

By Shaquasha "La Donya" Alequin

The world surrounds you  
And tries to drown you  
Calls you a statistic  
When you fall  
Wants you to bleed  
When you succeed  
And beats you down  
When you try to stand tall  
The streets do mean things  
Just for them green things  
The nice bling bling things  
That we all want  
You hate to settle  
Cause you want better  
But hate to go against  
What you were taught  
No other way  
Is what you say  
But what you think  
Is another story  
When it comes time  
To use your mind  
It'll be too late  
To ride in glory  
You walk the street  
To a different beat  
And blame the world  
For your misfortune  
Do what you gotta  
For Coogi and Prada  
Never thinking of  
Those you tortured  
Then one morning  
You wake up yawning  
Your mind prepared  
For a landing  
You realized  
When you open your eyes  
That you Know Why to Attain  
Knowledge and Understanding.



#### UNTITLED

By Hayden Mendoza

Another New York Summer. This city makes me shudder. I sit back and wonder if the deaf is getting deafer 'cause the dumb is definitely getting dumber. Brothers killing each other and society doesn't see that the beast that stalks the streets call themselves the Police. It's oxymoronic—using guns to keep the peace. Protecting them and not me, serving the rich community. Some youth of today are blinded, spell-binded, lusting for material things, bentleys and rings, cars and dough. But LIFE is more than money—it's what you know.

#### CYPHER SIDE

By Quesha, Hayden, Joseph, Erika, La'Toya

WE THINK THE WAY WE THINK  
WE ACT THE WAY WE ACT  
BECAUSE TOO MANY HIDDEN FACTS  
KNOCK US OFF OUR TRACK  
Matta' fact, let's go back  
To the days before young blacks  
Sold smack to put clothes on they back  
While plantation owners had us livin' in shacks  
Tied back with minds entangled  
In the webs of deceit  
Shackles on our necks, wrists  
Bounding escape from our feet  
When we were bred to be  
Physically strong and mentally weak  
Only plantation seeds were the ones that we reap  
Women demeaned and got their backs beat  
Sweating in the heat  
For miscreants stuck on a power trip  
Spittin' the orders and cracking the whip  
GET A GRIP ON MY REALITY  
DON'T PUT ME DOWN AND THEN SMILE AT ME.

# Coding Chart

HEADLINE	DATE	REPORTER	Page Number?	Violent or Non-Violent Crime?	Crime Involves Gun?	Youth Appear Primarily as Perpetrator or Victim?	Youth Perpetrators?
Police say Bank Robber left His Calling Card	1/1/00	Times Staff	A32	NV		Perp	
Suspect Is Shot as Bronx Police and Carjackers exchage Fire	1/1/00	C.J. Chivers	B3	V	yes	Perp	3
Woman Is Raped In Stairwell After Returning Hooome From A Party	1/2/00	William K. Rashbaum	A33	V		Vic	
Judge Set to Rule on Youths Expelled Over Illinois Fight	1/3/00	Dirk Johnson	A12	NV			6
Two People Are Shot At White Plains Mall	1/4/00	Times Staff	B6	V	yes	Vic	
Man Is Charged In Mall Slaying Of Schoolmate	1/5/00	Times Staff	B7	V	yes	Perp	1
Disabled Boy Put In Care Of Pennsylvania County	1/9/00	Times Staff	A19	NV		Vic	
Officer Shoots Man After Fatal Robbery	1/10/00	Times Staff	B5	V	yes	Perp	1
Shooting Victim Was Living His Parents' Dream	1/11/00	Edward Wong	B2	V	yes	Vic	1
Youth Pleads An addiction To The Internet In Threat Case	1/13/00	Micheal Janofsky	A20	NV		Perp	1
"Boy Who Killed Gets 7 Yrs., Judge Says Law Is Too Harsh"	1/14/00	Keith Bradsher	A1	V	yes	Perp	1
Mother And 2 Children Are Killed In A Brooklyn Arson	1/14/00	Juan Ferrero	B3	V		Vic	
Children And Mother Die Before Fire	1/15/00	Times Staff	B4	V		Vic	
Driver Charged With Murder In Three Car Crash	1/17/00	C.J. Chivers	B3	V		Perp	1
25 Years Later Suspect Charged With Slaying Of Greenwich Teenager	1/20/00	Paul Zielbauer	B6	V		Perp	1
Long Slow Road To A Trail In The Greenwich Murder Case	1/21/00	Paul Zielbauer	B1	V		Perp	1
Queens Student Fatally Shot After Argument	1/21/00	Times Staff	B7	V	yes	Vic	
Columbine High Library Will Be Demolished	1/23/00	Times Staff	A1	V	yes	Perp	2
Detroit Man Charged In New Family Killings	1/26/00	Times Staff	A1	V		Vic	
Teenagers Death Is Shaking Up Field Of Human Gene Therapy Experiments	1/27/00	Sheryl Gay Stolberg	A20	NV		Vic	
"Old Colors, New Battle Cry: Gang Founder Stresses Aiding Community, Not Assaulting It"	1/31/00	Chris Hedges	B1	V	yes	Perp	1
Man Pleads Guilty In Abducton Of Girl	2/3/00	Times Staff	A18	V		Vic	
Discrepancy By Race Found In the Trying Of Youths	2/3/00	Tamar Lewin		V			
"A Bronx Man, 35, Is Charged With The Sexual Abuse Of Boys "	2/5/00	William K. Rashbaum	B5	V		Vic	1
In The Slaying Of A Columbia Student & Mourning and Mystery	2/7/00	David Barstow	B1	V		Vic	
Moxley Murder Case Is A Circumstantial Challenge For Prosecutors	2/7/00	Paul Zielbauer	B1	V		Perp	1
Officials Identify Riker Inmate Who Died	2/7/00	Times Staff	B7			Vic	
Teenager in A Plea Deal Over Columbine Threat	2/8/00	Times Staff	A18	NV		Perp	1
"Girl,8, Is Found Tied Up And Her Mother Is Held"	2/9/00	Times Staff	B9	V		Vic	
"Teachers Aide Charged In Rape of girl,13"	2/10/00	William K. Rashbaum	B3	V		Vic	
Teachers aide Held For 3 Hrs. By Student With Gun	2/11/00	Katherine E. Finklestein	B5	V	yes	Perp	1
Boarding School Student Is Assaulted In Dormitory	2/12/00	Times Staff	B4	V		Vic	
Steinberg Denied Parole Again In Childs Death	2/12/00	Times Staff	B4	V		Vic	
Behind A Suspects Cool Facade Emotional Turmoil	2/13/00	David Barstow	B1/B4	V		Vic	
"In A Sandwich Shop, 2 More Columbine Students Are Killed"	2/15/00	Micheal Janofsky	A18	V	yes	Perp	1
Youth Held In Altering Of Grades By Computer	2/15/00	Times Staff		NV		Perp	1
Report Says White Officers Shooting Of Black Boy Was Justified	2/17/00	Paul Zielbauer	B8	V	yes	Perp	1

Youth Homicide Perpetrator?	Race of Youth Perpetrator (where identifiable)?	Youth Victims?	Youth Victims of Youth?	Youth Victims of Adult?	Youth Homicide Victims?	Mentions Differential Treatment by Race?	Mentions Decline in Juvenile Crime?	Examines Effectiveness of Incarceration?	Mentions connection between Poverty & Crime?	Mentions gun availability?	Reports School Shooting?	Mentions Zero Tolerance?	Mentions Columbine?	Mentions an Incident of Violence in School?	Direct Youth Quotes?	Indirect Youth Quotes?	Direct Police Quotes?	Indirect Police Quotes?
																1		5
		1			1													9
	black	1			1							yes						
		2																3
1		2	2		2												1	1
		1			1													
1		2	1		2													2
1		1	1		1										1			2
	white										yes		yes	yes	3			
1	black	1	1		1	yes		yes										
		3			3												1	3
		2			3													3
1		1	1		1												3	5
1	white	1	1		1													
1	white	1	1		1													
		1			1													3
2		12	12		12						yes		yes	yes				
		3			3												1	
		1																
		1			1													
						yes		yes										
					5												3	2
		1			1									yes	3			
1		1	1		1													
		1			1													2
		1									yes		yes	yes	1			3
		1																1
		1			1									yes				
		1												yes				
	1		1		1								yes	2				1
1		2	2		2						yes		yes	yes	3	1	1	4
		1			1													2

HEADLINE	DATE	REPORTER	Page Number?	Violent or Non-Violent Crime?	Crime Involves Gun?	Youth Appear Primarily as Perpetrator or Victim?	Youth Perpetrators?
Gang Robs Teenagers On A Queens Train	2/18/00	Katherine E. Finklestein	B3	V	yes	Perp	15
Man Arrested In Slaying Of Woman In Her Home	2/18/00	Times Staff	B6	V		Perp	1
Killing In A Georgetown Coffee Shop Stir Death Penalty Debate	2/20/00	John Files	A19	V		Vic	
Latest Columbine Deaths Are Mourned In Littleton	2/20/00	Times Staff	A29	V	yes	Vic	
Teenager Found Dead With Cord Around Neck	2/22/00	Times Staff	B6	V		Vic	
Arson Becomes Homicide as 6 Year Old Boy Dies	2/23/00	Times Staff	B6	V		Perp	2
Hazing Scandal At High School Horrifies Town In Connecticut	2/25/00	Robert D. McFadden	B1	V		Perp	8
Newark officers Suspended For Actions In Haircut Case	2/26/00	Ronald Smothers	B4	NV		Perp	1
2nd Gunman In Pizza Delivery Slayings Sentenced To 51 Years	2/26/00	Times Staff		V	yes	Perp	2
Mother To Be Charged In Stabbing Death Of Baby	2/28/00	Times Staff	B6	V		Vic	
"Boy,6, Accused In Classmates Killing"	3/1/00	David Barboza	A14	V	yes	Perp	1
A Life Of Guns Drugs And Now Killing All At 6	3/2/00	David Barboza	A1/25	V	yes	Perp	1
Struggling To Make Sense Out Of Boy Turned Killer	3/2/00	Erika Goode	A25	V	yes	Perp	1
Gunman Surrenders After Killing 2 In Restaurants In Pittsburgs Suburb	3/2/00	Jere Longman	A26	V	yes	Vic	1
"Mother And Daughter, 5, Arrested On Drug Charge"	3/2/00	Times Staff	B4	NV		Perp	1
"At Young Victims School, Reassurance And Questions"	3/3/00	David Barboza	A12	V	yes	Vic	2
Man Charged In 2 Rapes In Queens	3/3/00	Times Staff		V		Vic	
False Threat Leads School To Lockdown	3/3/00	Times Staff	B6	NV		Perp	
Drifter Confesses To Killing 13 People	3/4/00	Times Staff	A10	V		Vic	
Parents Who Abandoned Disabled Son Get Probation In Plea Deal	3/4/00	Iver Peterson	A9	NV		Vic	
Police Award After Shooting Prompts Ouster	3/4/00	Times Staff	A9	V	yes	Vic	
Teacher Is Dismissed For Affair 20 Years Ago	3/4/00	Times Staff	B4	V		Vic	
Violent Cast Of School Hazing Mirrors Society Experts Say	3/5/00	Andrew Jacobs	B35-36	V		Perp	32
California Proposal Toughens Penalties For Young Criminals	3/6/00	Evelyn Nieves	A1/17	V		Perp	
Classes To Resume After School Shooting	3/6/00	Times Staff	A14	V	yes	Perp	1
"Alone In Bronx, 2 Children Die In A Fire They Set Officials Say"	3/6/00	C.J. Chivers	B1	NV		Vic	
Children Back In School After Fatal Shooting	3/7/00	Times Staff		V	yes	Perp	1
Basketball Players Foul Draw A Jail Term	3/9/00	Ross E. Milloy	A12	V		Perp	1
Teenager Is Charged In Attack On Web Site	3/9/00	Times Staff		NV		Perp	1
Two Teenagers Stabbed In After School Fight	3/9/00	Times Staff	B12	V		Perp	3
90-Day Expulsion Urged In Slaying Of First Grader	3/10/00	Times Staff	A17	V	yes	Perp	1
2 Are Said To Be Linked To 5 Killed In Bronx	3/10/00	Times Staff	B6	V		Vic	
Boy Is Killed By Student Near School In Brooklyn	3/11/00	Katherine E. Finklestein	B3	V		Perp	1
7 High School Wrestlers Are Expelled In Hazing	3/11/00	Times Staff	B6	V		Perp	8
Judge Opens Court Proceedings On '75 Killing of Girl	3/11/00	David M. Herzenhorn	B5	V		Perp	1
Man Charged With Murders In Shootings Near School	3/12/00	Times Staff	A37	V	yes	Perp	1
Columbine Report Says 2 Gunmen Acted Alone	3/13/00	Times Staff	A18	V	yes	Perp	2

Youth Homicide Perpetrator?	Race of Youth Perpetrator (where identifiable)?	Youth Victims?	Youth Victims of Youth?	Youth Victims of Adult?	Youth Homicide Victims?	Mentions Differential Treatment by Race?	Mentions Decline in Juvenile Crime?	Examines Effectiveness of Incarceration?	Mentions connection between Poverty & Crime?	Mentions gun availability?	Reports School Shooting?	Mentions Zero Tolerance?	Mentions Columbine?	Mentions an Incident of Violence in School?	Direct Youth Quotes?	Indirect Youth Quotes?	Direct Police Quotes?	Indirect Police Quotes?
		6	6											yes				5
1																		1
		1		1	1				yes									
		2			2						yes		yes	yes				
		1			1													2
1		1	1		1													2
		3	3											yes	1			
	black	2	1	2				yes			yes	yes	yes	yes			1	2
		1	1												1			
		1		1	1												1	3
1		1	1		1						yes			yes	1			5
1		1	1	1	1						yes			yes	4			3
1		1	1		1						yes			yes				
1		1	1		1				yes	yes				yes				
1		1	1		1						yes			yes				
		2		2														3
											yes		yes					3
		4	1	4	4													1
			1	1														
		1		1	1												1	1
		1		1														
3		1	1											yes				
						yes		yes			yes			yes				
		1	1		1						yes			yes				1
		2		2										yes				1
1		1	1		1						yes			yes				
	Latino	1	1											yes				
																		1
		2	2	2										yes				2
1		1	1		1						yes			yes				
		1		1	1													2
1	Latino	1	1		1									yes				3
	white	1	1											yes				1
		1	1															
1		3	3		3									yes				
2					12								yes	yes				

HEADLINE	DATE	REPORTER	Page Number?	Violent or Non-Violent Crime?	Crime Involves Gun?	Youth Appear Primarily as Perpetrator or Victim?	Youth Perpetrators?
Second Suspect Arrested In Killing Of Volunteer	3/13/00	Times Staff	B5	V	yes	Perp	1
Slain Girls Mother Is Told "You've Got The Wrong Guy"	3/15/00	David M. Herzenhorn	B1	V		Vic	1
"Challenged By Father, Boy Kills Him, Officials Say"	3/15/00	Robert Hanley	B5	V		Perp	1
Graffiti Leads Police To 2 Boys Who Are Charged With Arson At School	3/15/00	C.J. Chivers	B3	V		Perp	2
3 Men Are Indicted In School Girls Slaying	3/17/00	Times Staff	A16	V	yes	Perp	3
Three Suspects Captured In Death Valley Case	3/19/00	Times Staff	A34	V	yes	Perp	1
Bronx Man Is Killed After Argument At Club	3/19/00	Times Staff		V		Vic	
Five Killed When Car Hits Road Cleanup Crew	3/20/00	Times Staff	A19	V		Vic	
Arrest Is Made 19 Months After Teenagers Slaying At New Jersey Party	3/21/00	Maria Newman	B7	V	yes	Perp	1
Stepfather Kills Himself After Son Is Found Dead	3/23/00	John T. McQuiston	B5	V		Vic	
"Tricked Into Opening Door, Women Are Sexually Attacked"	3/23/00	Juan Ferrero	B6	V	yes	Vic	
Police Officer Indicted On Molestation Charges	3/23/00	Times Staff	B6	V	yes	Vic	
Sixth Grader Takes Gun Into Classroom	3/24/00	Times Staff	A16	NV	yes	Perp	1
Signs In Grisly Killing Point To Bias And Stepfather Who Killed Himself	3/24/00	David M. Herzenhorn	B5	V	yes	Vic	
Pellets Fired At School Injure Four In The Bronx	3/24/00	Times Staff	B6	V		Vic	
SUNY Binghamton Is Criticized Over Anti-Asian Attack	3/26/00	Lisa W. Foderaro	A45	V		Perp	3
Report Set On Columbine	3/29/00	Times Staff	A21	V	yes		
Four Get Prison Time In Death Of Girl From Date Rape Drug	3/31/00	Keith Bradsher	A16	V		Perp	2
5 Family Members Are Discovered Slain Within Blocks In The Bronx	3/4/00	William K. Rashbaum	B5	V	yes	Vic	
TOTALS		TOTALS:		14NV 78V 1 blank	36 y	50 P 40 V 5 blank	132

Youth Homicide Perpetrator?	Race of Youth Perpetrator (where identifiable)?	Youth Victims?	Youth Victims of Youth?	Youth Victims of Adult?	Youth Homicide Victims?	Mentions Differential Treatment by Race?	Mentions Decline in Juvenile Crime?	Examines Effectiveness of Incarceration?	Mentions connection between Poverty & Crime?	Mentions gun availability?	Reports School Shooting?	Mentions Zero Tolerance?	Mentions Columbine?	Mentions an Incident of Violence in School?	Direct Youth Quotes?	Indirect Youth Quotes?	Direct Police Quotes?	Indirect Police Quotes?
1																		2
1	white	1	1		1													
1																	2	1
1		1	1		1						yes			yes			2	7
		1			1													3
		5			5													2
1		1	1		1													2
		1			1												1	4
		1			1												1	8
		2			2													1
		1			1									yes		1		1
		4									yes			yes			1	2
	white	1	1			yes								yes				1
		1	1		1						yes		yes	yes				
3		1	1		1													
		1			1												2	10
35	8 white 8 black 2 Latino	117	60	49	87	6 y		4 y	1 y	1 y	19 y	2 y	9 y	34 y	20	3	25	135

Coding Definitions:

1. The definition of "youth" is "persons 21 and under".
2. The definition of "victim" is a person assaulted (successfully or not), hurt, or murdered.
3. The definition of "quote" is a direct quote, where the words are within quotation marks.
4. The definition of "school-related" is at school, on the way to school, or on the way home from school.
5. In counting perpetrators and victims, we counted every person mentioned, even if not named or described in detail.
6. Race of youth perpetrators were distinguished by direct mention or in instances where youth perpetrator was pictured.

### **We INTERRUPT This Message**

*We INTERRUPT This Message* is a non-profit communications center with offices in San Francisco and New York and provides media services, training, and technical assistance to community organizations and public interest advocates. *INTERRUPT* was founded on the conviction that marginalized communities should have the power to speak for themselves through the media and should be empowered to challenge the media stereotypes and distortions that misrepresent them. *INTERRUPT* defends human and civil right by partnering with grass roots and public interest organizations to challenge racist, anti-poor, and anti-youth stereotypes promoted through the news. *INTERRUPT*'s work is centered on building the capacity of advocates and activists to claim their voice in the media and change the terms of debate over the issues facing their communities.

### **Youth Force**

In the words of its youth founders, "*Youth Force* was created to school young people to the fact that we are not powerless, we should be seen and heard, and we have the ability and the right to act for change. We are committed to giving ourselves and other youth the skills and opportunities we need to participate in the running of our schools, neighborhoods and city." Currently, *Youth Force* members are engaged in efforts to prevent and reduce the incarceration of young people and increase resources for youth in the juvenile and criminal justice systems; tenant organizing to rehabilitate and protect low-income housing; and community outreach and organizing efforts to advocate for public policies that respect young people.

*Youth Force*. 320 Jackson Avenue, South Bronx, NY 10454. [www.youthforcenyc.org](http://www.youthforcenyc.org)

*We INTERRUPT This Message*. 226 W. 135th Street, Harlem, NY 10030. [www.interrupt.org](http://www.interrupt.org)