

Justice Talking Listening Guide
Murder: Beyond the Blood and Gore
2/20/06

SHOW SUMMARY

Americans are fascinated with murder. You can see this cultural fixation in best selling novels, television news and entertainment, and headlines from local papers. Most Americans probably can name more murderers than they can Supreme Court justices. But what about the significant policy debates on the best ways to reduce America's startling murder rate? Some say the solution is in better community policing efforts or new gun control measures, while others push for harsher sentences or increased use of the death penalty. On this edition of Justice Talking we ask what can be done to reduce homicides in America.



Richard Rosenfeld



Franklin Zimring



George Kelling



John Timoney



Edna Buchanan

• Part 1: **Richard Rosenfeld**, a professor of criminology and the co-author of "Crime and the American Dream," speaks with Margot about America's murder trends—how many, where and what kind of murders happen in the United States.

• Part 2: Reporter **Monica Brady Myerov** tells the story of how the murder rate in Boston, Massachusetts decreased for a decade but then hit a ten-year high last year, and what the city plans to do about it.

• Part 3: **Franklin Zimring**, a criminologist and law professor who authored the book "The Great American Crime Decline," debates **George Kelling**, a criminal justice professor who came up with the "broken windows" theory of crime, about the effectiveness of crime-fighting policies around the country.

• Part 4: **John Timoney**, the chief of the Miami Police Department who has also worked in Philadelphia and New York City and is nationally respected for lowering urban crime rates, speaks with Margot about Miami's approach to combating the most violent crimes.

• Part 5: **Edna Buchanan**, a crime fiction author and a former Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter who covered murders for the Miami Herald, speaks with Margot about why the public is so attracted to stories about killing.

The New York Times
LearningNetwork

Learn about what Milwaukee, Wisconsin Police Chief Nannette Hegerty calls "the rage thing," in the New York Times article "**Violent Crime Rising Sharply in Some Cities.**"

http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/featured_articles/20060213monday.html



Host Margot Adler

Margot Adler is a National Public Radio correspondent based in NPR's New York Bureau. Adler has thirty years of experience as a radio host and reporter and is the author of several books. She lives in New York City with her husband and son.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Murder – the intentional killing of one person by another person. For a killing to be considered murder, it cannot be an accident, committed in self-defense, or be otherwise lawful such as in specific cases of war. There are two types of murder, first degree and second degree. First degree murder must be deliberate and premeditated, meaning it must be planned ahead of time by the person who commits the murder. Second degree murder is intentional, but is not deliberate or premeditated, meaning that the person who committed the murder did not plan to kill the victim before the time of the incident, but was conscious of his or her actions at the time of the incident.

Broken Windows Theory – a theory of crime prevention put forth by criminologists James Q. Wilson and George Kelling in a 1982 article in The Atlantic Monthly magazine. The name “broken windows” comes from the following example in that article.

“Consider a building with a few broken windows. If the windows are not repaired, the tendency is for vandals to break a few more windows. Eventually, they may even break into the building, and if it’s unoccupied, perhaps become squatters or light fires inside. Or consider a sidewalk. Some litter accumulates. Soon, more litter accumulates. Eventually, people even start leaving bags of trash from take-out restaurants there or breaking into cars.”

The broken windows theory holds that preventing crime is best done by addressing small problems that encourage anti-social behavior, since they will surely escalate if left unaddressed.

COPS Program – The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), housed in the Justice Department, was created as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. Its mission is to advance community policing, which focuses on crime prevention on a local rather than federal level and encourages the involvement of community members in crime prevention. The COPS program offers grants, training and technical assistance to local, state and tribal law enforcement agencies. The assistance enables those agencies to hire more staff on all levels of their criminal justice systems and provide them with appropriate coordinated training.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How have murder rates in the United States changed since the early 1990s? What are some of the factors that experts say have caused these changes?
2. What are some of the ways cities are trying to reduce their murder rates? Which methods do you think will be most effective and why?



New Orleans has gone from a city with one of the highest crime rates to a city where there is almost no crime. This is particularly visible in the number of murders that have been committed since Hurricane Katrina. So what’s a homicide detective to do?

Listen to the National Public Radio report “**New Orleans Police Face New Challenge: Less Crime**” at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5201007>.