

# OPINION & COMMENTARY

## THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

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**Barbara A. Henry**  
President and Publisher  
barbara.henry@indy.com  
(317) 444-8131

**Tim Swarens**  
Editor of the Editorial Pages  
tim.swarens@indy.com  
(317) 444-6176

**Dennis R. Ryerson**  
Editor and Vice President  
dennis.ryerson@indy.com  
(317) 444-6169

**Pamela B. Fine**  
Managing Editor  
pam.fine@indy.com  
(317) 444-6168

### Overheard

**"We can't solve the crime problem in Indianapolis. We can deal justly with the persons who are before us justly and as quickly as possible."**



Marion Superior Court Presiding Judge  
Cale Bradford

**"The issue here is not jail overcrowding. . . . The issue is two things: Kids dropping out of school. And guns."**



Defense attorney Robert Hammerle

**"People have no fear of consequences, and what are we talking about? Jail overcrowding."**



Olgen Williams of Christamore House

### EDITORIAL

# Casualties of neglect

AS HOMICIDES CLIMB, IT'S TIME FOR SERIOUS, BIPARTISAN ACTION ON PUBLIC SAFETY

#### Our position:

Local leaders have at least 90 reasons why they must do a better job of confronting crime.

Last weekend's spree of nine murders, along with the murder of Gary "Chip" Hoosier earlier in the week, are reminders that blood is being shed senselessly as a result of the community's long-term neglect of public safety.

The year's first victim was David "Slim" Twitty, gunned down in an Eastside auto-body shop early New Year's Day, allegedly by Jarvis Brown, later linked to five other shootings. Then came 35-year-old Edward Yelley, struck down in January on the Southside.

In February, Tiffany Farral and her boyfriend, Donsha Jones, were slain as they slept in their bed, Farral's children in the next room. Earlier that month, Erika Thornton and the pregnant Keyonia Dunn were killed in their Westside apartment, allegedly by Dunn's boyfriend, who also tried to kill their children. At month's end, William Berry was shot to death as he stood beside his truck.

In April, the body count within Indianapolis Police Department's jurisdiction was double the same month last year. Deandre Gaines, 15, was ripped by a bullet that pierced the window of his friend's duplex. Days later, Angelic Sanders; her boyfriend, Martin Richardson; and her mother, Delores Taylor, were found dead inside their Westside home, hands tied behind their backs.

In May, seven members of the Valdez-Covarrubias and Albarran family were brutally murdered in their Hamilton Avenue home.

And now, Chip Hoosier, whose body was found in his cab Wednesday night, has joined at least 89 other men, women and children who have died this year.

Through it all, city leaders have pointed fingers and undercut each



**STANDING TOGETHER:** Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson spoke last week at the Community Peace Celebration at St. Philip Neri Catholic Church during a National Night Out event. Other gatherings were held across the city to focus on fighting crime.

other's proposals. Save for the plan to rent 200 beds at the privately run Jail II and Saturday's summit on dealing with the carnage, there's been little bipartisanism in a search for solutions.

Some moves are helpful, such as the extension of the IPD's middle and late-night patrols by two hours and the addition of 18 sheriff's detectives to patrols. But they don't address underlying factors, notably the state's dropout crisis and low educational achievement.

David, Edward, Tiffany and Donsha deserved better. So did Keyonia, Erika, Angelic, Martin, Delores — and all homicide victims. The casualties of Indianapolis' crime wave have piled up for too long. It's time for serious, thoughtful, broad, bipartisan action.

from January through April 2006, plus the percentage of increase from the same period a year before:

Robbery: 740, up 38%  
Aggravated assault: 1,053, unchanged  
Larceny: 5,085, up 28%  
Residential burglaries: 1,598, up 20%  
Non-residence burglaries: 440, up 52%  
Vehicle theft: 1,256, up 11%

Source: Indianapolis Police Department

### BEYOND HOMICIDE

The rising body counts obscure the fact that the city's crime wave goes beyond the spike in murders. Robberies, larcenies and burglaries have been on the rise for the past few years, while the percentage of cases being solved by the Indianapolis Police Department in the first four months of this year has fallen to 24 percent from 27 percent a year earlier.

The following numbers show various types of crime and the number committed

## Crime scene horror

Marion County Sheriff's deputies Grady Copeland Jr. and Robert Hatch expected to find a body at Forest Hills Apartments on the Westside that February night. But what they discovered when they got there was shocking.

Neighbors were tending to the head wounds of Jalen, Kristopher and Ronald, ages 5, 9 and 10, after they were found wandering around the complex. At their apartment, the bodies of their mothers, a pregnant 20-year-old Keyonia Dunn and Erika Thornton, 31, shot and killed in their respective bedrooms. Dunn's 2-year-old son, Desean, lying in front of Thornton's bedroom, had been shot in the neck but was still alive.

It didn't take long for deputies to

learn the identities of the men they say were responsible for such carnage. An alert officer heard Dunn's



**Royal Amos was charged in the killings of his ex-girlfriend and another woman.**

grandmother say that Keyonia's ex-boyfriend, Royal Amos, was responsible for the shootings. After his name and that of alleged co-conspirator Howard Harris were broadcast to the public, police picked them up in Bloomington sitting in a car in a Kroger parking lot. Both Amos and Harris now sit in Marion County Jail, facing a lengthy list of charges, including two counts of murder and four counts of attempted murder.

Their capture, however, won't bring Keyonia and Erika back to life or return to their children the mothers who loved them.

# Tax cuts play little role in economic growth

"Soaring revenues are proof that tax cuts help the economy," a Star editorial declared July 19. Indeed, tax revenues have run well above expectations in the past year and the federal government budget deficit will be less than \$300 billion this year — below projections of just six months ago and more than \$100 billion lower than analysts' predictions of a year ago. Tax revenues, The Star claimed, were up \$616 billion because of the tax cuts.

Though I will mark myself as one of the "naysayers" the editorial chided, let me suggest that the Bush tax cuts did not and could not have had such an impressive impact. Tax revenues are indeed up, but they aren't up solely or even mainly because of the tax cuts. Moreover, cutting the deficit to only \$300 billion three years into an economic expansion is hardly a cause for celebration.

Let's be clear about the tax cuts: Tax cuts of some sort were almost certainly warranted back in 2001. The



**PETER Z. GROSSMAN**

economy was weak and putting money in consumers' hands is one way to stimulate an economy that has stagnated.

But contrary to the implication of the Star editorial and the belief of some opinion makers, tax cuts do not generally pay for themselves, much less produce vast additional revenues; even the Bush administration acknowledges that its tax cuts won't pay for themselves. The White House messianic review of budget trends noted that the long run benefit of current tax cuts would be an annual increase in U.S. gross domestic product (the main measure of economic performance) of about 0.7 percent. That means that

by 2016, for example, the Bush administration expects that the tax cuts will have led to \$146 billion in extra GDP, which will add about \$30 billion in additional tax revenues. But the report admits the Bush tax cuts will reduce government revenue by \$314 billion.

In fact, Republican economists have always maintained that the benefits of these tax cuts were going to occur only if they were accompanied by reductions in government spending. But this administration and Congress have been perhaps the most reckless spending bunch in American history. Without spending cuts, eventual tax increases are inevitable.

But what about that extra \$616 billion in revenues? Weren't they the result of tax cuts? Actually, no. These revenues are due to economic expansion, especially increases in corporate profits. As I've said, the economy benefited initially from tax cuts. But it is absurd to say that our economy is growing largely because of the tax cuts. Indeed, it has gener-

ally grown for the past 200 years. During the 1990s, the economy and tax revenues soared even though we had tax increases. No one believes that the Clinton tax hikes caused all or most of the economic growth of the 1990s; the Bush tax cuts certainly didn't cause most of the economic growth in the last few years.

In fact, since much of the increases in revenue are due to rising corporate profits, one has to wonder whether the tax cuts are currently playing any role. Corporate tax rates did not fall along with individual rates; yet companies are the ones filling the government's coffers.

I'm also a skeptic when it comes to deficit projections, and what "beating them" means. Yes, some experts were expecting deficits in the \$400 billion range this year and we can all be thankful that they were wrong. But in 2004 the Bush administration projected a deficit of \$201 billion for this fiscal year. By that reckoning the administration has produced a deficit almost \$100

billion higher than what is now expected. Any projection of government revenues is based on expectations of economic growth, stock market performance, and corporate profits — none of which is easily judged more than six months in advance.

A number of critics also have pointed to the problems that lie ahead. Social Security and Medicare costs, the largest component of the federal budget, will be rising as baby boomers age and retire. As the Star editorial noted, we need an "overhaul" of all entitlement programs as well as real tax reform — two suggestions I wholeheartedly endorse.

But tax cuts, especially without spending cuts, provide no economic magic potion. We are doing well now not because of the policies of Washington's leaders but in spite of them.

★ Grossman is the Efraymson Professor of Economics at Butler University. His column appears the second Tuesday of the month. Contact him at: pgrossma@butler.edu

## A wave of new Americans

All this month, members of Congress will be holding hearings around the country on immigration. They'll be hearing undoubtedly from some of the extremists on the issue — people who suppose that we can easily expel and do without the services of the 12 million or so illegal immigrants in our midst, people who suppose we should just give amnesty to those who are here in a blink of the eye. It's an issue I'm especially interested in, as the paperback edition of my book "The New Americans: How the Melting Pot Can Work Again" is out this week. The consensus around Washington is that members of Congress will not be able to reconcile the border-security-only measure passed by the House last December and the bill with border security, guest-worker and legalization provisions passed by the Senate in May.

That may be right — but it shouldn't be. America needs immigration legislation to regularize the flow of immigrants in tandem with our labor markets and to promote assimilation and Americanization, which, in the past, enabled immigrants and their children to become interwoven into the American fabric and worked to make our country more prosperous, productive and creative.

Regularize the flow of immigration. Opponents of legalization and guest-worker programs talk as if the only moral blame for illegal immigration should fall on the illegals themselves. But we are all complicit. Politicians and officeholders, Democrats and Republicans, voters of all stripes have for a long time failed to insist on effective enforcement of the law.

There are different ways to change this situation. Some would require people to return to their countries of origin; others would let them pay fines and back taxes and apply for legalization without leaving the U.S. But the governing principle should be to find a way for immigrants to come here legally in response to the demand for their labor that obviously exists. Shutting off the flow of immigration would severely damage our economy. Legalizing it would improve our security. We need to do the latter.

Which gets me to assimilation. We Americans have proven much better at assimilating immigrants than have most other nations. But some of our elites have soured on, in Theodore Roosevelt's word, Americanization. Education elites have produced bilingual education, which too often is neither bilingual nor education. Immigrants' children need to learn to speak, read and write in English. Political and judicial elites have mandated bilingual ballots — even though applicants for citizenship need to show they've mastered English. Transnational elites, to use Professor Samuel Huntington's word, have taught a version of American history that treats the Founding Fathers solely as slaveholders and tells us nothing about World War II but the internment of Japanese Americans. They want to encourage immigrants to remain in separate and oppositional cultural enclaves.

I still have hopes that Congress will be able to pass a compromise immigration bill that will regularize immigration in tandem with the labor market, with border security measures and with a later phase-in of something like the free-market guest-worker bill sponsored by Rep. Mike Pence and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison. But that's not the whole task. Large majorities of both the American people and of immigrants themselves favor assimilation and Americanization. We need to overcome the efforts by elites to undermine it. Americans have dealt with immigration constructively before. We can do so again.

★ Barone is a senior writer for U.S. News & World Report and a syndicated columnist for Creators Syndicate. Contact him at info@creators.com.