

Gun violence

By BRIAN LOCKHART

It's three o'clock in the morning and you are awakened by a strange noise.

You look out the window and see a man ? a man you recognize ? using a crowbar to pry open a side window of your next door neighbor's house.

Most likely as a member of the community, a neighbor, and possibly a friend, you call the local police and report a burglary in progress.

If you're the brawny type, you may even go outside and give the burglar a well deserved crack across the shoulder blades with a Louisville Slugger to get his attention and hold him until police arrive.

That's one way to convince a criminal you don't appreciate them coming into your neighborhood to steal people's personal belongings and cause damage to their home.

If the burglar realizes the jig is up and flees before the police arrive, you have two options.

The first option is to tell the police what you saw and inform them that the burglar was that guy named Bob who lives down the street and spends half his time in jail. You know this because you are an eye witness.

Your second option is to tell the cops you ?didn't see nothing.? Then tell your friends the next day ?I ain't no rat or squealer.?

Chances are you will take the first option for several reasons. For starters, breaking and entering is a crime. Secondly, you don't want Bob coming back and using your house for his next target.

In some societies the second option is the preferred one apparently.

People would rather let a murderer go free than tell the police what they saw.

The Toronto Police Chief held a news conference to discuss the spate of shootings across the city during the civic holiday long weekend that left 13 people either injured or dead. He was calling for witnesses to come forward.

But there won't be any witnesses ? there never is.

Recently a group of mothers in Toronto, most of whom had lost a son to gang violence, spoke to the Toronto Police Services to see what could be done about the fact that a large number of young men in their ?community' had been murdered. Murdered by other young men in the same community.

One mother made the comment that she wanted to know ?why their sons are being killed.?

The police of course had to remain politically correct, and not speak the truth of the situation, but rather pledge that they will ?work with the community.'

Good luck with that.

Most if not all of these murders are gang related. The person who has been shot knew his murderer the minute he laid eyes on him.

His gang buddies who were there also know who the shooters are ? except they aren't talking, and they won't talk.

Many of these murders have happened in broad daylight in front of several witness. A few have happened in places where as many as 100 people were in attendance, and yet when the police arrive ? no one saw anything.

Police don't arrest killers on a whim. They need witnesses. That's the way the system works.

While community members are quick to call on the police to do something, they too easily ignore the problem in their own community and the code of silence that allows killers to walk the streets.

If you really want the killing to stop, you can't pretend you know nothing, saw nothing, and then just disappear back into the horror show of a neighbourhood you live in.

The police can't stop a gang killing before it happens. Most of these shootings are either targeted hits or spontaneous actions that happened when two rival gangs accidentally run into each other on the street.

Instead of blaming the police and society, start blaming yourselves for creating a sub-culture where this type of activity is considered normal.

The truth is, most people don't care when a gang member is shot dead. Most likely the killer will end up dead in a few weeks anyway when the first gang seeks retribution.

Of course the obituary will say he was a good guy who was ?turning his life around.?

It always does.

The real problem is when you've got creeps with illegal guns shooting up the street there is always the chance that an innocent bystander could be hurt or killed. It has happened before and will happen again.

The only way for these shootings to stop is for these ?communities' to be accountable for their own actions.

Given their history over the past 20 years, that likely won't happen.