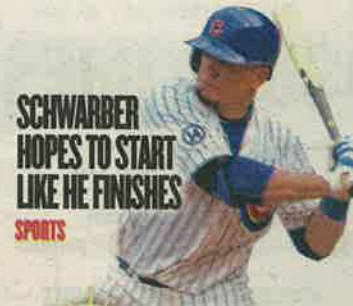


SUNDAY

# SUN-TIMES



SCHWARBER  
HOPE TO START  
LIKE HE FINISHES  
SPORTS



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2017 | \$2 CITY/BURBS \$3 ELSEWHERE | LATE SPORTS FINAL



47° 33° NOBLE

Orr players celebrate their 79-74 victory over North Lawndale on Jan. 13.

ASHLEE REZIN/SUN-TIMES



SUN-TIMES SPECIAL REPORT

## WHERE PLAYGROUNDS HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH PLAY

Safety around Orr mostly exists indoors

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# SPECIAL REPORT



FIFTH OF FIVE PARTS BY RICK TELANDER



Orr's Dannie Smith says it can be difficult for him to focus on basketball because of "the things I've seen."  
ASHLEE REZIN/SUN-TIMES

# WHERE PLAYGROUNDS HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH PLAY

*"All my friends are going/And things just don't seem the same"*

— "Born in Chicago" by Nick Gravenites

**T**hings aren't the same in Chicago. It may shock people to know that the city, with its ridiculous 780 murders in 2016, is not nearly as deadly as it was in, say, 1974, when there were 970 homicides, or 1994, when there were 931. The numbers in those years were inflated

by the start of gang wars and the evil crack cocaine genie flying out of the lamp, respectively.

The 2016 numbers seem particularly grotesque, however, because homicides have declined dramatically nationwide in the last 20 years. Chicago now has more murders than Los Angeles and New York City combined.



Murders in 2016 went up by more than 50 percent from 2015. That sets our town apart. And 2017 appears to be more of the blood-red same.

The besieged areas are almost exclusively in the minority-laden, poverty-stricken South and West sides. Remnants of devious mortgage practices, Daley-regime/white-

man politics, the 2008 Great Recession that nuked real-estate values in working-class minority neighborhoods, plus the demise of manufacturing jobs everywhere, have made parts of the West Side, where Orr High School sits, virtual war-zone wastelands. We need not mention the effect that a demoralized, understaffed police force — one that now fears the Black Lives Matter movement and the incessant videos that can undermine even good cops trying to do their

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jobs — has on the rise in violent crimes.

In response, the black middle class has largely fled for safer places, with Chicago's African-American population down by nearly 200,000 since 2000. People who can't get out, who must stay and weather the fusillade of torment — they are the outliers. They are the survivors.

And that includes every member of the Orr basketball team.

One afternoon, I gave Dannie Smith a ride to where he's staying. He had remained behind so I could interview him after practice, and I felt, as coach Lou Adams has said, "What, I'm gonna let him walk? And get shot?" No way.

In the car, I ask Smith what the biggest problem for him is regarding basketball.

"You mean, staying focused?"

I nod.

"The things around me," he said. "The things I've seen."

Of course, his two best friends, Edwin and Edward Bryant, were recently killed. And just last week he saw a dead body near Cicero and Chicago. He watched as police put a sheet over it.

He thinks back to his deceased twin buddies, just 17.

"I could have been with them. I talked to Edward that day."

I asked Smith about the sweet urban tradition of playing hoops outdoors in the summer, when it's too hot to do much else.

He shakes his head. Nope.

"Too dangerous."

This brings up another harsh reality caused by violence: Safety, if it exists at all, can only be found indoors. Playgrounds now have little to do with play, and a populace that has grown more and more obese and unhealthy — in deep need of exercise — can safely do little but sit on couches and play video games.

This "indoors-ification" of children is a quiet tragedy that is but one of the ripple effects of wild-west violence in a city where the police confiscated nearly 8,000 guns last year, where on the West Side the crackle of fired bullets is almost as common as dogs barking.

◆ ◆ ◆

In a rematch against Marshall at the Commandos' 86-year-old building on West Adams Street, there are a dozen burly, red-jacketed security guards at the upstairs gym, roughly one for every 20 people in the stands.

With an enrollment of under 400 students, 98 percent of whom are African-American, Marshall's student body, like Orr's, is a mere



Rayvond Turner found himself in the doghouse after showing up late for a game against Young after a friend of his was shot. | ASHLEE REZIN/SUN-TIMES

**Safety, if it exists at all, can only be found indoors. Playgrounds now have little to do with play, and a populace that has grown more and more obese and unhealthy — in deep need of exercise — can safely do little but sit on couches and play video games.**

fraction of the size it was decades ago when it was a virtually all-white school. Some of the plaques in the hallway harken to a vanished society: guard Izzy Acker was a star on the Marshall teams that won 98 consecutive games in the early 1940s; Bimbo Gantman was all-city on the "junior" team, when such teams existed.

In the gym, there are banners proclaiming Marshall the "1964 State Fencing Champions." In 1965, too. Those were the days.

As the varsity players sit in the stands and watch, Marshall wins the sophomore game 71-66, with the final minutes resembling flag



Parts of the West Side, where Orr High School sits, have become virtual war zones. | ASHLEE REZIN/SUN-TIMES

football. Lou Adams, who is observing from behind the bench, gets so incensed with a call that he goes onto the floor and screams,

"That's TERRIBLE!"

He gets a technical foul, and the ref tells Orr sophomore coach Carlos Enriquez, "Get him off the floor!"

Little Rayvond Turner — not to be confused with the varsity's Raekwon Drake — played only a few minutes late in the game. He had 22 points in a previous sophomore game, outplaying everyone, but he's in the doghouse since he showed up late for a game against visiting Young. Enriquez could have melted Turner with his eyes. "Sit the f— down!" the coach yelled in the second quarter when Turner got up during a substitution.

Why was Turner late?

"I don't know," Enriquez said distractedly after the game, a bad loss. "I think a friend of his got shot."

Really?

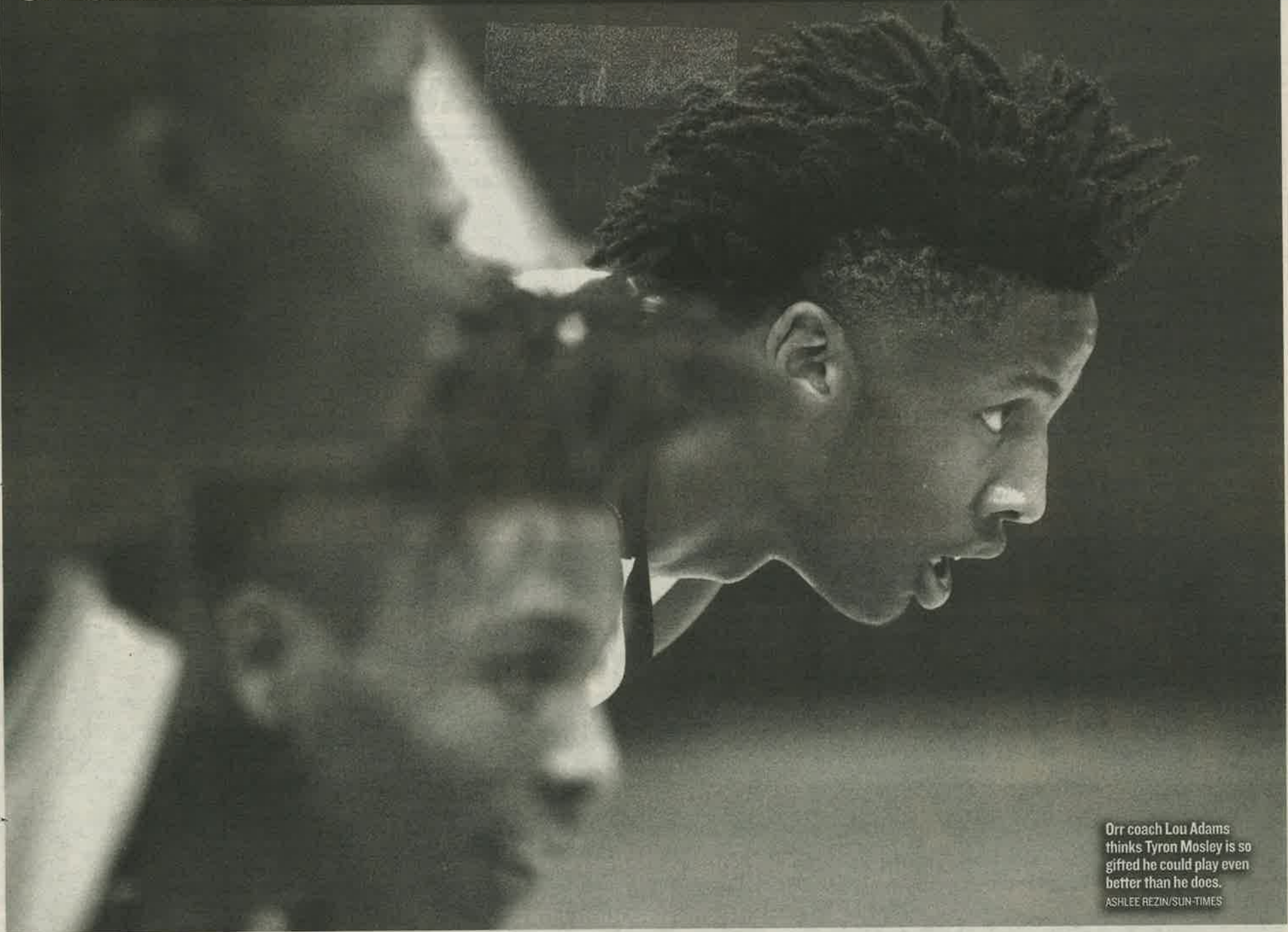
"Yeah."

There wasn't much sympathy to go with his statement. It strikes me that there isn't time for much sympathy here. Don't wanna ball, kid? There's a dozen more out there who do. Desperately. You were shot in the foot? You got troubles? Deal with it.

After the game, I told Turner, now in the stands behind the Orr bench, leaning back in

**SEE UNDER THE GUN, PAGE 78 »**

# SPECIAL REPORT FIFTH OF FIVE PARTS BY RICK TELANDER



Orr coach Lou Adams thinks Tyron Mosley is so gifted he could play even better than he does.  
ASHLEE REZIN/SUN-TIMES

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## UNDER THE GUN

a girl's lap, that I'm sorry about his friend.  
"Thanks," he said.  
I ask him who's helping him with his issues.  
"My cousin."  
And how is Turner handling it all?  
"I just gotta keep working," he said.

"Keep going," I said, rather lamely.  
"Thank you, sir."

◆◆◆  
During a night drive-along through the Harrison District with a Chicago police sergeant — a veteran cop and former Marine who has spent years in the toughest spots in Chicago — I see the dregs of the West Side doing what they do.

It is the coldest night of the year, 5 degrees, with a wind chill of minus-20, yet here and there, business is at hand.

There are the dope dealers near the liquor stores, the random guys in parkas and hoodies walking on the sidewalks, headed nowhere. There are even a couple hookers, or maybe just forlorn women searching for a high. Everybody's looking around, heads on swivels, as if they are meerkats on a frozen plain, fearful of stalking hyenas.

"Anybody who says drug dealing is not hard work hasn't seen it in person," says my cop. "First, you have to look out for police. Second, you have to try not to get shot. Third, you try not to freeze your balls off for eight hours. Or try not to get roasted when it's, as the gangbangers say, 'Congo hot' out there."  
And for almost nothing.

Former U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, who has spoken with a number of jailed dealers, says \$5 an hour is all that some

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make. "Forty dollars for eight hours," Duncan said. "As a shooter, selling weed. One kid told me he started selling drugs at 8. He told me it was really hard, but he had no choice."

My cop says \$100 a day is closer to what a decent dealer/shooter can make. Danger included.

Duncan added, "But we refuse to give them a job for \$20,000 a year!" He wanted to make it clear that not everybody could be saved. "Seventy-five, 80 percent would take that deal, the real job. The other 20 percent, that's the police's issue."

My cop, a personal friend, is driving his family car because he's off-duty and simply doing me a favor, so I can see what is laid out before officers pledged to serving and protecting the public.

The sergeant has seen crazy things in the ghetto, and he feels hamstrung and angry about the perception of cops as an evil, invading force.

As we watch two small boys on bicycles at a gas station at Independence and Harrison, with an older dealer the policeman knows is "pimping them out," the cop is conflicted by the rage he feels over the man's criminal immorality and the subliminal, nearly religious, forgiveness he has for the situation that likely fosters such depravity.

"From my experience, unless there's a caring male figure in a boy's life — a father, coach, teacher, minister — things don't go well," he said. Which leads to another

***It strikes me that there isn't time for much sympathy here. Don't wanna ball, kid? There's a dozen more out there who do. Desperately. You were shot in the foot? You got troubles? Deal with it.***

observation. "A lot of guys, until I throw them on the ground, they've never heard a male tell them, 'No.'"



On Feb. 15, Orr plays at Curie in the quarterfinals of the Public League tournament, and Adams is in fine form, picking up a technical foul early for berating the refs over what he thinks is a ridiculous call. He comes very close to getting tossed from the gym, but his assistant coaches guide him back to the bench and relative calm.

This drama is almost comical because all three of the refs know Lou well — one even socializes with him — but they are genuinely serious about giving him the heave-ho if he acts up anymore.

The Public League never runs short of



Orr's Brian Hernandez gets fired up during a Public League tournament loss at Curie on Feb. 15. | ASHLEE REZIN/SUN-TIMES

goofy drama. For example: Back on Jan. 11, the bus never came for Orr's away game at Westinghouse, leaving the players to get there any way they could. Adams had to stick around and close up everything at Orr;

arriving at the game at the end of the first quarter. He compared himself to the pilot in the movie "Sully," saying, "I had to be the last one out of the gym."

Just as entertaining was the fact that Young's coach, Tyrone Slaughter, was at the Orr-Westinghouse game, even though his own team was playing at Marshall, because Slaughter had been tossed from his last game for receiving two technical fouls and was given a one-game suspension.

Against Curie, Orr falls behind by 17 points early, and a rout seems forthcoming. But this is a fierce group, and led on by Adams' vein-bulging histrionics, they battle back. It is here that 6-5, walking-stick-thin point guard/forward Tyron Mosley shows the skills that remind one of a younger, shorter Kevin Durant.

Indeed, Adams screams at Mosley far more

than anyone else on the team, because he thinks Mosley is so gifted and could play even better than he does.

"Man, is he something," Adams has whispered, just watching Mosley run through drills.

Behind the skinny fellow's all-around play and Smith and Drake's shot-blocking and Brian Hernandez's three-point barrage, Orr actually ties the game 59-59 late. Sadly, they lose 62-61 on a free throw. The Spartans finish the regular season with a record of 15-5, ranked 12th in Illinois by MaxPreps.com but No. 1 among all IHSA Class 2A schools. Orr won its first 2A playoff game on Wednesday and its second on Friday night, beating Uplift 69-61 using a barrage of long-range buckets. The Spartans play again Tuesday.

From a basketball standpoint, it's been a good year — and it could get even better if those playoff wins keep coming.

In fact, Adams has decided he might stick around and coach another year. Later, at his small desk at Orr, he daydreams about his starting lineup, since he loses only senior Alex Flute among his top seven players. "So the starters are Drake, Mosley, Hernandez, Dannie Smith, maybe Emanuel ...," he says with a smile.

And there's even a rumor that a tall — really tall — kid might transfer in. Forget chef work. Lou's special spaghetti sauce can wait.

But who knows what might be in the



**MORE ONLINE**

• To read the first four parts of the series, go to [chicago.suntimes.com](http://chicago.suntimes.com).

future? The dragon called violence has not slithered away. The streets bleed on.

I am reminded for some reason of the double slaying that occurred last month about a mile from Orr on West Fulton Street, with two 16-year-old boys, neither in a gang, shot dead in a drive-by. The unusual thing was one bullet careened through a gate and up the concrete stairs of a 65-year-old woman's house, flying through her wooden front door and hitting her in the leg. Her leg was broken and she lost a lot of blood. But she lived.

Why do I think of this, out of all the killings and maimings that have occurred in my three months of reporting? I don't know.

But also I think of a book I read almost 20 years ago, "The Rape of Nanking" about a little-discussed slaughter of Chinese civilians by Japanese troops at the start of World War II. Soldiers used Nanking residents to practice bayoneting and even for beheading contests. The author, a young, brilliant former Illinois journalist named Iris Chang, did research showing that somewhere between 260,000 and 350,000 civilians were murdered, some being nailed to walls, buried alive, hung by their tongues from giant hooks, and other grotesqueries too awful to ponder. No one can fully explain what happened or why.

When people are under stress and free from guidance, Chang wrote, "The veneer of civilization seems to be exceedingly thin."

The researching of that veneer apparently took its toll on Chang herself; she committed suicide in 2004 at age 36. Chang had other issues, but as her biographer, Paula Kamin, wrote, "She suffered greatly with the darkness of the subject matter."

We all suffer with dark topics, but the youth in Chicago's worst areas suffer immeasurably with our city's dark stain — the gunfire that will scar them emotionally forever, if they survive.

I'll go back to the question I posed at the start of this series: How would you do if you were an impoverished kid of color growing up under the violent born-in-Chicago flag?

Me? Knowing what I know about myself? I don't think I'd make it.