



## Crime & Punishment

James Alan Fox on criminal behavior and the justice system

YOUTH VIOLENCE

### Prime time for summer crime

Posted by James Alan Fox, Crime and Punishment June 14, 2010 11:00 AM

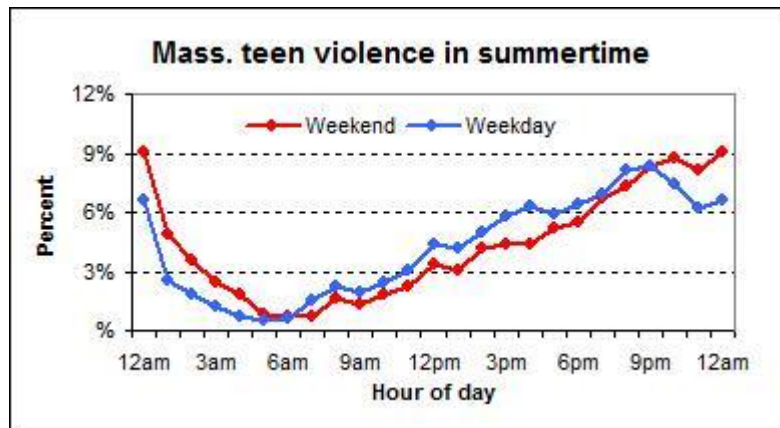
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Street gun violence has been rising in Boston's poorest neighborhoods of Dorchester, Roxbury and Mattapan. Residents are up in arms, calling on youth to put down their arms the deadly, loaded kind, that is. Meanwhile, the familiar faces of the local clergy Reverends Rivers, Brown and Wall are once again ready to do their part to try and stem the tide of violence, especially with the approach of the summer months.

The summer crime problem is more than just about hot temperatures, hot tempers, and hot trigger fingers. It is all about idleness: kids with too much free time on their hands, too much free time to kill perhaps literally.

Unlike the other seasons of the year when youth crime peaks in the after school hours, during the summer the prime time for juvenile crime is well in after dark. As shown in the figure below, the prevalence of teen violence in Massachusetts during July and August peaks at 9 pm on weekdays and midnight on weekends. It is important,

therefore, to provide constructive and structured activities for adolescents during these hours to keep them occupied and safe.



Rev. Rivers is planning his From Guns to Gloves program, encouraging gang members to swap banging for boxing. But there needs to be other opportunities for those who aren't particularly interested in duking it out.

The city needs to make sure that its parks, basketball courts, and ball fields are open late, with ample lighting, adequate equipment and sufficient adult supervision.

For years, the Boys and Girls Clubs have been particularly effective in contributing to violence prevention by providing that safe haven and a positive place for kids. Local clubs have expanded hours for teen programs throughout the summer, staying open as late as 11 pm.

Local Boys and Girls Club facilities and Rev. River's boxing rings are a start. But it is a bit too little and a bit not late enough. A much greater contribution and investment in initiatives like these are crucial to avoid the summertime surge in violence. Contrary to Eddie Cochran's classic hit from 1958, when it comes to dealing with street violence, there is indeed a cure for the summertime blues.

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