

# NPR: Gun Homicides in Chicago Reach 'Startling Number'

Demarco Webster Jr. didn't like going outdoors, his father said. Sadly, it's not hard to see why.

In October, the 14-year-old [was gunned down](#) while trying to help his father, who was moving, tie a mattress onto a vehicle.

Webster was one of more than 700 homicides in Chicago this year, [NPR reported](#) Wednesday, days before the New Year. That's up about 65 percent from last year's total.

Eighty-six people were murdered in August alone, the deadliest month the city witnessed in nearly 20 years. Chicago Public Radio asked Aleta Clark, a mother of two, what life in the city is now like.

"It's like the devil is just loose," said Clark, a resident of the Englewood neighborhood. "Kids being shot. Women being killed. We're losing all our men to gun violence and the penitentiary." (Listen to her story below.)

What's driving the violence? Many theories are posited in [the NPR article](#).

Rev. Marshall Hatch, a Chicago-area preacher, said relations deteriorated after a video was discovered showing a Chicago policeman fatally shooting Laquan McDonald, who was black and unarmed. The officer was charged with first degree murder. (The video of McDonald being shot is below: VIEWER DISCRETION ADVISED)

"[Police have] seen it in their best interest to pull back and not be aggressive," Hatch says. "That probably has helped fuel a lot of the surge of violence that we've seen this year."

Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson admitted that officers are not policing the same.

"They're cautious about the national narrative that's out there right now, so they're careful about how they do police," said Johnson, adding that he believes sentencing laws are too

soft, especially on repeat offenders.

To what “national narrative” is Johnson referring? I’ll hazard a guess and say it’s the Black Lives Matter one. It’s the narrative that black homicides matter—if it was a police officer pulling the trigger.

There is [a record](#) of the deaths Black Lives protested in 2016: Bruce Kelley Jr., Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Joseph Mann, Abdirahman Abdi, Paul O’Neal, Korryn Gaines, Sylville Smith, Terence Crutcher, Keith Lamont Scott, Alfred Olango, and Deborah Danner.

All were blacks killed through interactions with police officers. (Some of these shootings were deemed justified; some were not.)

You won’t find Demarco Webster Jr.’s name on this list, nor any of the other 700-plus victims of gun homicides in Chicago.

It’s difficult to write this because I believe America *needed* a Black Lives Matter movement. Police have immense power, and for too long there seemed to be too little oversight on how that power was exercised. The problem with Black Lives Matter lies not in its inception, but in its execution.

As citizens, we should demand transparency (body cameras are a good place to start) and hold police accountable for their actions. (Unjustified shootings do exist, perhaps more than some are willing to admit.) But no one is served by the mutual fear that exists between police departments and those they’ve been tasked with protecting and serving. And that, to put it bluntly, is where BLM excels. They have convinced many people that police are targeting young black men, and that police are their primary predator.

The fear and animosity that results from such a narrative is very real, and deadly. (As I type this, news broke that number of deadly ambushes on police officers [reached a two-decade](#)

[high](#) in 2016.)

If Supt. Johnson is correct, and police are beginning to pull back from their duties out of fear of “the national narrative that’s out there right now,” expect the increase in killings to continue.

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