

On the Job: Life at the 28th Precinct, Part 2

From murder capital to million-dollar apartments

By DAMASO REYES
Special to the Amsterdam News
“They’re putting crack cocaine in areas where a person shouldn’t have to look,” the officer confided, shaking his head.

Welcome to life in the 28th Precinct, where crime is down but the criminals are smarter. Officer Stephen Antiuk, who was discussing the difficulties he has been having lately in finding drugs on suspected dealers, has spent all nine years of his time on the job at Harlem’s 28th Precinct and in that time has observed the dramatic changes the neighborhood has gone through as the city’s rising economic prospects have trickled up to Harlem.

“It’s not nearly as bad as it used to be. The 28th Precinct in the 80s was known as the murder capital,” he told a reporter while driving back to the station house after a somewhat unsuccessful day of observing street-level drug dealers. “The 28th

Precinct has the record for the most homicides of any precinct in the city and now we get maybe two or three a year,” he added.

With homicides and violence down to a level that makes New York statistically safer than Port St. Lucie, Fla., the Police Department has turned its attention towards street-level dealers, who in the past had been rarely targeted.

“Ten years ago you wouldn’t be going after little guys on the side of the street with a bag of weed,” Antiuk said.

To that end Officer Antiuk and his partner, Sgt. Samuel Borrero, recently spent a day looking for the little guys on the sides of the street from an empty apartment building. With the sergeant lying in wait in an unmarked car, Antiuk used a pair of high power binoculars to observe dealers as they waited for customers. Like most surveillance, the work of the Street Narcotics Enforcement Unit

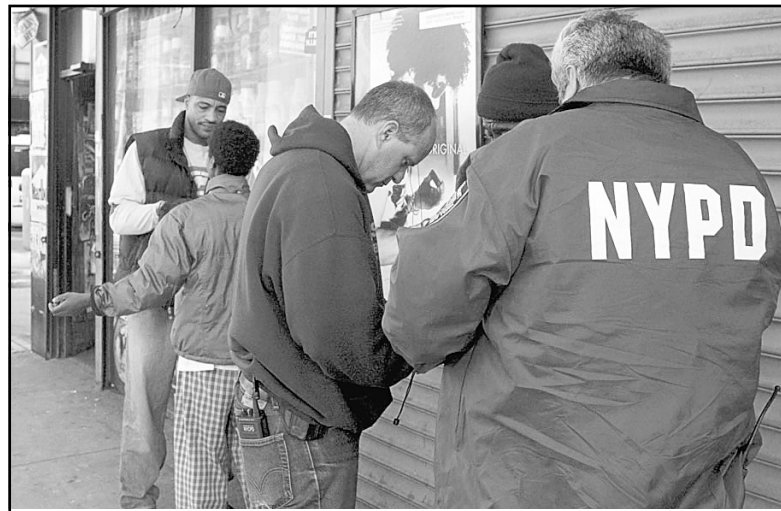
(SNEU) can be tedious. But it is this work that is forcing the dealers off the street and bringing crime down.

“The goal is to apprehend the sellers and the buyers,” the officer said while keeping an eagle eye on a suspected dealer. “It all goes back to quality of life,” he added.

If improving quality of life has been a goal since the Dinkins administration then the officers at the 28th Pct. have outdone themselves. The area has gone from being New York’s murder capital in the 1980s with more than 200 homicides in some years to just six murders in 2005. The perceived increase in safety has brought in lots of new residents and workers with lots of money, most notably former President Bill Clinton. As murders and violent crimes have gone down the NYPD has begun to focus on other issues that they would not have had the time or manpower to cover before, and street-level drug dealing is one of them.

So officer Antiuk sat and waited. And waited. He watched his subject walk up and down the street, make phone calls, drink a soda, all unaware that he was being watched from above.

“This is what it’s like now—just sit and wait. Five, ten years



Undercover police officers on the job in Harlem.

(Damaso Reyes photo)

ago you would never have to wait this long to see a deal go down. Now, we wait,” Antiuk said, lifting his binoculars once again when the object of his scrutiny came back into view after going into a local shop.

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Candlelit vigil for somber anniversary

By NAYABA ARINDE
Amsterdam News Staff

“The police and the mayor’s office just want to sweep the killing of my son under the carpet,” said Phyllis Clayburne, who is the mother of Timothy Stansbury, the 19-year-old victim of the itchy trigger finger of housing cop Richard Neri.

On January 24, the family, friends and posthumous supporters and advocates of police-shooting victim Stansbury held a vigil outside the Louis Armstrong

Houses in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The candlelit gathering marked the two-year anniversary of the young student’s death at the hands of the New York City police officer.

On January 24th, 2004, Timothy, 19, had been DJing at a party. He went to get more music and was going to use the rooftop as a shortcut. He climbed the stairs and as he pushed open the door – without identification or warning – housing cop Richard

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Charles Barron joins Phyllis Clayburne and Timothy Stansbury Sr. at the vigil commemorating the death of their son.

(Lem Peterkin photo)

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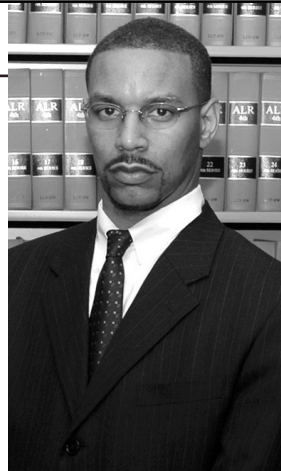
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TWU

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me whether they're serious or posturing." In his words, the MTA's latest contract proposal has "all of the worst features, and more, of their original proposal."

The contract members voted down has been replaced with a less attractive one. Pension reimbursements that would have given some 20,000 members from \$8,000 to \$14,000 for overpayments are gone, as is mater-

nity leave and assault pay for bus drivers, conductors, and operators, and much more. Back is the hot-button item that triggered the strike that stopped the city's subways and buses three days in December – the new pension tier for incoming employees, and the demand that workers pay 1.5 percent for health care coverage.

Back, too, are sick leave restrictions that let inspectors visit workers at home. Union officials say this has given "No" voters a rude awakening. The MTA has

also included broad banding demands and the creation of a new subway operator title that some observers say would lead to significant downsizing and the expansion of its one person train operation.

Meanwhile, by Monday, February 6, the union had to file a counter to the MTA's request for binding arbitration. And, by Thursday, February 9, it must nominate an arbitrator to serve on PERB's three-person fact-finding panel which will determine whether or not there is an

impasse which would require binding arbitration.

In addition, the union is fighting to protect the income that allows it to function on a day-to-day basis – automatic dues check off, the process whereby the employer deducts union members' dues from their paycheck and turns it over to the union. Union members' dues, roughly \$22 every two weeks, make up some 87% of the union's total income. A large part of these dues go to providing basic services for the members, for example defend-

ing thousands of them each year in disciplinary proceedings or conducting safety inspections. Without that money this cannot be done.

Union officials say they have contingency plans in place that would involve members voluntarily setting up an automatic dues-paying process. Some members told the Amsterdam News that while some of this is about the fact that "some people just don't like the president of our union, this isn't about him, it's about the members."

Police

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"The principle of what we do hasn't changed much: we spot, we look, we see, we grab. It's just that we've gotten smarter, they've gotten smarter and more patience is needed," he added.

More than two hours had passed since Antiuk began his watch and his subject was still waking up and down the street, innocent for all intents and purposes, and the officer was still waiting for him to slip up. In a flurry of action Antiuk was on the radio to his partner, his calm demeanor

transformed.

"Did you see that, in front of the bodega! The old man and the woman," he shouted before flying down the stairs and out the door.

When the SNEU (pronounced "snoo") team observes a drug deal being made they try to move in quickly before the dealer has time to discard the rest of his stash and the buyer can get away. This time they couldn't move fast enough and by the time they got to the street two of their suspects had disappeared, but the man they considered the dealer was in handcuffs being frisked. While they didn't find any drugs, they did find several thousand dollars in cash, which

he claimed he was going to use to buy a gold chain. Without any hard evidence they had to release him.

"Did you see that knot? He had a wad the size of King Kong," Antiuk told his partner as they drove through the streets looking for the other suspects. "I tell you that's more money than you or I will ever see," he added, clearly frustrated they could not arrest a suspect they felt was very likely up to no good. Today dealers rarely carry their own drugs, giving them to others to hold so they aren't caught with the contraband. These "expendables" are sometimes users themselves and of little value to the dealer other than the small

amount of drugs they might be carrying. All this makes it more and more difficult to get a clean arrest.

After driving for ten minutes Borrero spots the old man and the woman back at the exact same spot they were before. A quick search found that whatever they were carrying must have disappeared in the interval and the two officers headed back to the station house, their observation position having been compromised when they tried to make the arrest. While no one was taken into custody, the dealer's operation was disrupted, at least for the afternoon. While this day may have been frustrating, Antiuk and Bor-

rero have a clear understanding of what their motivation is.

"When you pull out a wad like that to a 16-year-old and say, 'That could be yours; just take some of this for me and go and stand on the corner,' that's a serious temptation," Antiuk said.

"If you take a hundred kids, ninety-five percent will say no. But those five are all it takes; that's five out of a hundred and that's serious," Borrero added.

With million-dollar condos springing up left and right in the precinct there is little doubt Antiuk and Borrero will be continuing to watch the streets from above.

Walmart

(Continued from Page 4)

not provide a reasonable level of health benefits with at least 500 employees and facilities of more than 10,000 square feet, or more than 100,000, of which five percent is used for groceries. The bill requires each employer to provide health expenditures of at least \$3 per hour worked by each employee. It also mandates a minimum benefits package, including inpatient and outpatient hospital

services, physicians' surgical and medical services, laboratory, diagnostic and x-ray services, prescription drug coverage, and more.

Big box retailers have been shown, in nationwide studies, to offer insurance plans with costly premiums, strict eligibility requirements and more that force more than a quarter of their workforce to rely on government health care programs instead. This not only drives up state and local taxes but also puts a strain on the state's Medicaid program, causing costs to nearly double since 1995.

According to a recent Kaiser Family Foundation report, the typical big box employee pays, if they can afford it, 16 percent to 25 percent of total health plan premiums. Wal-Mart requires workers to contribute even more – 42 percent of the total cost of the plan.

While Wal-Mart isn't the only offender, they're emblematic of the big box disaster. Opponents charge that large retailers move into communities, offering consumers cheaply made foreign products, which they buy in huge volumes and can therefore sell at lower

prices than their competitors. But, as critics charge, those low prices come at a great cost. Locally owned businesses that can't compete are forced to close. Manufacturing jobs are outsourced to other countries where salaries are pitifully low and benefits non-existent.

But, Savino says, big box employees pay the highest cost. Schneiderman says big box retailers "have repeatedly violated wage and hour laws and the Fair Labor Standards Act," pointing to instances of minors working too

late, during school hours, or for too many hours in a day. Savino says salaries "often fall below the poverty level." Annual salaries at Wal-Mart in 2001 were about \$13,861 for sales associate, the most common job, and \$11,948 for cashiers, the second most common job.

"The poverty line for a family of three in 2001 was \$14,630," said Savino. "How can Wal-Mart with all its billions of dollars in profits possibly justify the poverty level wages they're paying their employees?"

Run

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Since the news of Paterson's candidacy leaked out, some have criticized the Democratic ticket for lack of geographic balance. The slate includes Spitzer and Paterson, both from Manhattan, and State Comptroller Alan Hevesi, a resident of Queens and the winner of a crowded attorney general primary in which all candidates but one are also from the city and its suburbs.

But Paterson countered that the areas he has represented are "emblematic" of the rest of the state, adding, "Harlem understands the plight of upstate farm-

ers who can't make ends meet."

Pressed after the speech, he conceded that geography was "a factor" in the campaign, though he contended it would not be a decisive one.

"This is a tremendous way to launch a campaign," said H. Carl McCall, the Democratic candidate for governor in 2002. "People throughout the state want change. They want new leadership."

Spitzer's selection of Paterson, who has represented Harlem in Albany since 1986, comes as a surprise to the political world, both because of its early timing in the campaign season and its implications for former Hillary Clinton counsel Leecia Eve, another Black candidate whom many Harlem

Democrats had endorsed for the position.

"Eliot believes that David will be a tremendous asset in helping to build consensus for change in the State Legislature," Robert Toohey, Spitzer's campaign manager, wrote on the campaign's blog. "In David, he has a trusted partner who can deftly work the halls of the state capitol. This is critical because to a large degree an executive is only as effective as his ability to unite others in working towards a common goal."

The lieutenant governor has few defined responsibilities other than being next in line for the governor's chair and serving as the ceremonial presiding officer of the Senate. By running statewide, Paterson is giving up the prospect

of assuming the much more powerful post of Senate majority leader in the event Democrats win control of the Senate within the next few years.

The Spitzer campaign declined comment on the particulars of the decision. Paterson's office also declined comment and has not yet released an official acceptance statement.

Eve, who has officially withdrawn from the race, had been preparing her campaign for lieutenant governor for almost a year. She was endorsed by several leading Harlem Democrats including Representative Charles Rangel (D-Harlem); David Dinkins, the former mayor; Percy Sutton, a former Manhattan borough president; and even Paterson's father,

Basil Paterson, a fixture in state and city administrations.

"I don't remember David Paterson asking any of us for his support, but if Eliot has picked a candidate, who am I to deny him that decision?" Rangel told the New York Times.

At least one community leader expressed delight at the prospect of a Lieutenant Governor Paterson.

"As lieutenant governor, he will be visible and out in the forefront. I know he will not forget where he came from," said Jordi Reyes-Montblanc, chair of Community Board 9. "When New York City gets the short end of the stick, Harlem gets no stick, and with David Paterson there, that will not happen."

Police

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fully to eliminate, some "re-tooling" was needed.

Commissioner Kelly has routinely made institutional changes that negatively impact Blacks: Elimination of the promotion to police officer for school safety and traffic enforcement agents, the attempt at arbitrarily ending promotional eligibility lists at the exact point where Blacks are positioned, the transferring of

uniformed chiefs to historically civilian positions and tampering with civil service exam grading to promote non city residents to supervisory positions.

To see what diversity looks like in this NYPD, go to the NYPD website's photos of the bureau heads. These photos serve to shatter the myth that this administration is inclusive and diverse.

Marq Claxton, spokesperson for 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care, is a retired NYPD detective.

Fulani

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voters. And while I was getting Mike Bloomberg elected for a second term, Sharpton was busy getting David Paterson in position to win a first term as Lt. governor.

On November 8, 2005, the Black community said it will not be captive to the Democratic Party. In my view, this shift will make Sharpton freer to exercise his political power within and

around the Democratic Party, all to the good for Black people. The 2005 electoral revolution was all about our wanting greater political independence. The leaders who recognize that – and Sharpton is certainly one – will be the ones to take things to a next stage.

Sharpton and I have certainly traveled different roads. Sometimes they've run on parallel tracks, sometimes they've crossed. They remain distinct, but these days are close enough so that we can see and speak to each

other across the divide.

What has brought us closer? There is a simple answer: it's the Black community, which has always insisted that we find ways to be together, in spite of our differences.

Lenora Fulani is a developmental psychologist and a member of the Independence Party's State Committee. She leads Lenora B. Fulani's Harlem Independence Club, which meets monthly. She can be reached at 212-962-1699.