



# Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office

## ***NEWS RELEASE***

David A. Clarke Jr.  
Sheriff



2013 Sheriff of the Year

Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 9, 2014

### A Tale of Two Milwaukees

#### **Milwaukee, WI – Statement from Sheriff David Clarke on this week's fatal shooting of a 29-year-old woman on Center Street:**

The Broken Windows theory of crime reduction states in essence, that if symbols of disorder and urban decay are left unattended, they create an environment for crime and violence to thrive. Criminals interpret it as a sign that no one cares and that residents are unlikely to call police or to get involved when crime occurs.

Area residents, on the other hand, interpret the disorder as city officials having given up on the neighborhood. They become apathetic and are less likely to call police or neighborhood services for help, and the quality of life deteriorates into urban decay.

On Monday, around 5:00 p.m. at N. 24<sup>th</sup> and W. Center streets, a major thoroughfare during rush hour, a 29 year-old woman sitting in a car in traffic was gunned down after a shooter opened fire on a group of people standing on the street corner. Another man was hit by the gunfire. It appears, according to news accounts, that she was caught in the crossfire.

The gunman, spurred on by an environment of chaos and disorder, felt brazen enough to shoot indiscriminately at a crowd of people in a residential area in broad daylight within sight of traffic driving up and down the street. He had no fear of being identified, nor did he fear that a police squad might be right around the corner. The Broken Windows theory of policing predicts this kind of criminal behavior.

On Tuesday, around noon, I went to the area to get a firsthand look at the environment, and what I saw was predictable. Neglect. It could have served as a picture of urban decay in George Kelling's *Broken Windows* book. I saw boarded up homes with broken out windows, trash strewn all over alleys and abandoned cars. There is very little quality of life. The many law abiding neighbors I talked to communicated total despair. They deserve better.

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Mayor Barrett did not hold a news conference in the street at 24th and Center as he did after a fatal shooting on N. Oakland Avenue and E. Locust Street, where he reassured residents that the

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neighborhood was safe and that the shooting there was a rare event. He promised more protection, which is reactionary. His absence of reassuring the law abiding residents of 24<sup>th</sup> and Center that he cared about them communicated that residents of this central city neighborhood were on their own and that the area has been turned over to the criminal element.

Mayor Barrett gets away with this because the local newspaper lets him get away with it. City officials and the newspaper could have gone down there like I did on Tuesday. Instead, they continue to mask over the extreme urban decay with happy thoughts about thriving areas of the city. It is the, "Don't look over there, look over here," sleight of hand strategy.

Milwaukee will not survive by leaving behind a growing number of neighborhoods that are sinking into the abyss.

I had to take pictures of the area around 24th and Center so that city officials could not spin and say I was exaggerating. Included is a picture of Mayor Barrett's news conference (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, December 20, 2013, photo by Kristyna Wentz-Graff) on N. Oakland Ave.

