



## What Killed Jane Creba: Rap, Race, and the Invention of a Gang War

By Anita Arvast

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**What Killed Jane Creba: Rap, Race, and the Invention of a Gang War** By Anita Arvast

**The sensational story of a girl's tragic death and the whirlwind of racial prejudices that came in its wake.**

On Boxing Day 2005, fifteen-year-old Jane Creba was fatally shot on one of the busiest streets in Toronto. Police and journalists reported her death as that of an innocent bystander caught in the crossfire of rival gangs.

In the months that followed Creba's death, fifty-six men of colour were arrested in connection with the shooting. Twelve men went to preliminary hearings. One black man pleaded guilty, and another three men, also black, were convicted of her murder.

But only one bullet killed Jane.

*What Killed Jane Creba* is not only a story of a true crime, but of the sensationalism and prejudice that clouded the story from the outset. The author guides readers through the incident and its aftermath, revealing that the whole truth can only be known when we set aside judgements and begin to ask questions: who, what, when, where, how, why, and what next?

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

A fascinating look at Toronto's rap subculture and the social inequalities that run rampant in a city that most see as fair and progressive. (*Napanee Beaver*)

Anita Arvast uses the case as a springboard for examining racial inequities and fault lines that too frequently go unacknowledged in Canada. (*Quill and Quire*)

Good investigative journalism ... of particular interest to those in fields such as social justice, race relations, community services and anyone with an interest in the justice system. (*The Miramichi Reader*)

#### About the Author

Anita Arvast is a professor of literature and cultural studies at Georgian College and has numerous publications in the arenas of social justice, education, literature, and true crime, including the book *Bloody Justice: The Truth Behind the Bandidos Massacre at Shedden*. She lives in Barrie, Ontario.

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On December 26, 2005, guys with guns drew on each other on one of the busiest streets in Canada on one of the busiest shopping days of the year. The guys who drew the guns were almost all men of colour. The shots shook Toronto and the whole nation to its core as it took the life of a sweet, fifteen-year-old girl who was merely crossing the street in the midst of what all accounts would call a case of rival gangs taking their rivalries to the streets.

In the city that was known as "Toronto, the good," we had shit to deal with.

Jane Creba. Homicide #78/2005.

Just like that. A number.

She had a gentle smile. She was a grade 10 honours student and star athlete at Riverdale Collegiate. She lived a comfortably upscale life with her remarkably supportive family in Toronto's primarily Greek neighbourhood. Her home was just a stone's throw away from some of the major projects in Toronto, where guns were put on in much the same fashion most people would put on underwear. She was from a neighbourhood. They were from a hood.

Jane stole our hearts.

She was a beautiful child.

She was a beautiful child who shouldn't have died.

Like so many children.

Jane's shooting created terror, followed by demands that someone step up to prevent another such death. The Green Apple Project, named after Jane's favourite food, brought massive police raids to fourteen various low-income areas in Toronto resulting in hundreds of detentions ? primarily of young, black men.

The media had a heyday. Because selling news is sometimes about telling us to be afraid, we heard about gangs with guns gone mad. The media and police christened it "The Year of the Gun."<sup>1</sup> Those reports were somewhat true. That year, nineteen people aged twenty-two or younger died at the hands of guns.<sup>1</sup> Those people wouldn't really make the news though.

Joan Howard lost her son to gun violence in 2003. She cried out against the contraband weapons coming up from the United States. She cried out against the shooting of her son, whose death elicited very little media coverage.

The *Toronto Star* reported at the time, "Howard says Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government is

missing in action in making gun violence and its aftermath a national priority. 'I would never want to wish this kind of pain on anybody but maybe if it came to Harper's doorstep they would do something.'"<sup>2</sup>

Joan Hampton is a black woman. Her son was a man of colour ? a youth worker, a basketball coach ? shot in the head at his apartment building while on his bicycle.

Two years later, in 2005, the coverage changed. Gun violence became the news.

Jane Creba's death forced us to pay attention. That attention was focused on the incident itself, as opposed to the underlying causes ... but that's what most of us who open a newspaper, turn on the news, view our tweets, or check out the latest on our computers. We want digestible pieces. Instead of being encouraged to dig deeper, we want to be "in the know." The media would deliver what we wanted. That message was easy: be scared of every young, black guy living in projects in Toronto because they were all part of gangs. Crips or Bloods. They fell short of using the N-word, because that would be politically incorrect. So we just heard this: rival gangs.

On the tenth anniversary of Jane's death in 2015, the *Toronto Star* published an article about how right the police got it.<sup>3</sup> The article cited police as being content that they set a precedent ? four men in total were convicted for her death (two for murder and two for manslaughter), but only one bullet hit Jane, and only one of the men fired a gun. The *Toronto Star* called it "The Jane Creba Effect" ? four convictions for one bullet. And one of the men charged never even fired a gun. They were all black. We were told they were all "thugs."

They were allegedly all part of gangs.

You got time for a story?

The media did.

The N-word is a highly politicized term that some people have said ought never be pronounced. Political correctness doesn't change perspectives, it only changes the ways people can express prejudice. People always find new ways to say it. It might not be *boy* and it might not be the N-word.

It might be a far more clandestine and infinitely more dangerous disguise. Just like the cover of this book. What colour did you assume that person's skin was?

It's only natural. We've been taught these assumptions.

*Thug* is a word usually applied only to bullies and they are presented in typical ways ? in hoodies and in high-tops with a bit of bling around the neck and usually with some variation of brown skin.

But there are thugs who are icons in corporate culture. Like Steve Jobs. A celebrated entrepreneurial thug. Thugs are academics who claim that their version of bullying is "academic freedom." Like Phillippe Rushton, who sought to maintain a stereotype that penis sizes, race, and intelligence were all related. Thugs are police who claim that their bullying is "keeping people safe" even while they break the law. Thugs are members of our governments who claim that their bullying is "in the public interest according to their election mandate" as they monger fear and create new legislation to deal with the fear they've mongered. Thugs can be the media reporters who sometimes hound people to get stories. Inside their own realms, the bullies don't get called thugs. Sometimes they don't even get called bullies. They get called successful.

Bullies are everywhere; they hide behind their own rhetoric to justify their behaviour.

Most bullies don't unpack their own behavior. They take their baggage and sell it to their corporate boards, to the pulpits, to the classrooms, to Parliament, to the public. What we think is a thug isn't white and well off. We think that the street is the only place you can find thugs.

We'd like to believe we don't have racism in Canada. We were, after all, the final destination of the Underground Railroad not that long ago. We represented the North Star and the road to freedom.

We don't have twenty-one-year-old white-supremacist Dylann Roof walking into a Charleston Church bible study and slaying nine people of colour. And then going to prison where he was raped and tortured. We don't have cops shooting down black guys like they do down in the U.S. We don't have the fifty-year-old man shot eight times in the back after running away from police for fear that he would be jailed for failing to pay child support. He'd been pulled over for a burned out tail light. What was his name, again? Walter Scott. His family will remember, but we likely won't. The blame was laid on that one cop who set Walter up, planting a

taser beside Scott as he was dying ? all that captured by someone walking by who happened to have a cellphone. We don't have the hundreds of other incidents that don't get captured on a cellphone. We don't have Freddie Gray, who had his spine fractured as he was being brought into custody, and we don't have the protests of Baltimore. Even if the cops who caused his fatal spinal injuries have been indicted and that bit of unrest settled, we aren't done with unrest. For every moment captured by a camera, scores more go unseen. Unrest goes quiet. But it's there. It's here.

It's far easier to lay blame on individuals rather than systems. Blame those cops who abuse their power. Blame the thugs who commit crimes. Maybe make the prison deal with all this blame. Make it out all black and white, or all light and dark. Black is wrong. White is right. Light is joyful. Dark is scary. Let's forget about anything remotely in-between.

In Canada, we don't have Freddie or Walter. We didn't have Rodney King. We didn't have Malcolm X. We didn't have Martin Luther King. Because we don't have riots and blatant issues of racial profiling and police brutality, we'd like to think we don't have those issues. Of course, we *did* have racism when the Underground Railroad brought too many ex-slaves to the East Coast and they all got put in a place called Africville, an area the city of Halifax neglected to the point of squallor. And, of course, we *did* have racism when the Japanese were interned during the Second World War and had all of their belongings taken from them. And, of course, we *did* have racism in the residential schools and our treatment of First Nations people. And we still have racism now in the hushed sentiments of "those muslims," and the attacks on mosques and spiteful acts carried out against women wearing hijabs.

But no. We like to think we don't have racism like in the U.S. We don't have potential presidents saying that we should ban all people of a particular faith from coming to our country.

What we have is systemic ... something we disguise.

On December 15, 2014, some nine years after the Creba killing, the *Toronto Star* broke a story that the Toronto Police Service had finally brought in a psychologist from the U.S. to investigate racial profiling by members of the police force. So now we have proof that there are problems. They range from police racial biases to the carding of individuals based on race to the detention of young, African-Canadian men even when they are not being investigated in a criminal case. These practices lead to feelings, perceptions, and behaviours that run deep and cause insecurity and even hatred. It's been there a long time, but at least we are finally talking about it.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Shawn Farr:**

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#### **Willie Blackburn:**

Do you among people who can't read satisfying if the sentence chained within the straightway, hold on guys

this aren't like that. This What Killed Jane Creba: Rap, Race, and the Invention of a Gang War book is readable by means of you who hate those straight word style. You will find the information here are arrange for enjoyable studying experience without leaving possibly decrease the knowledge that want to offer to you. The writer regarding What Killed Jane Creba: Rap, Race, and the Invention of a Gang War content conveys the idea easily to understand by most people. The printed and e-book are not different in the content material but it just different such as it. So , do you still thinking What Killed Jane Creba: Rap, Race, and the Invention of a Gang War is not loveable to be your top list reading book?

**Randy Garrison:**

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