The Running Man

Freddie Gray ’s harried life was too typical of young black men in Baltimore—until it ended

By Michael Anft

When all else failed, Freddie could run.

As a boy facing long odds in school and in life, he would outrace friends on the football field and blow by them on the basketball court. As those odds played out as a young man, when he dealt drugs and made himself a presence along West Baltimore’s streets, projects, and alleyways, he’d run from the heat.

A litany of arrests, including some that included manhandling by the police, his neighbors in Sandtown-Winchester say, and a bum rap or two might have inspired him to use his wiry legs yet again. Freddie’s strategy--leave them grabbing at air—didn’t always work. He was arrested nearly two dozen times. But movement is freedom. Without fail, he’d run.

So when, on a sunny spring Sunday morning at the corner of North and Mount, right outside the King Grocery Mart where Freddie Gray often hung out with his boys, despite the “No Loitering” sign, he and a city police lieutenant riding a bike toward the corner from the east briefly locked eyes, Freddie was off and scurrying.

Westward a half block to Bruce Street, no more than a tree-shaded alley decorated with trash, where he turned left. Galloping past the rolled up carpet, old tires, a sofa. Flying past the 7 houses on the west side of the next block down, five of them boarded up. Skirting the mown-grass lot with signs banning pets and ball playing, and where there is no playground equipment. Across Presbury and into Gilmor Homes, a drab low-rise public housing project, where he entered a walkway called Bruce Court and pulled up.

“They weren’t going to catch him—Freddie was fast, man. But he surrendered anyway, just stopped right here,” says Kevin Moore, who points to a spot right in front of his apartment. “People talk about his asthma, and he always smoked those Black & Milds, but it never affected his physicality.”

Once corralled by an officer who had gotten down from his bike, several police carried him around the corner of a project building to a squat stone wall where Presbury meets Bakbury Court, a carbon copy of Bruce Court a half-block over. This is where Moore pulled out his cell phone, followed the scene, and recorded the images that traveled around the world.

“He didn’t weigh more than a buck twenty-five and they was just throwing him around,” adds Mike Coner, Moore’s next-door neighbor. (Police officials and leaders of the police union refused to comment on this story, citing the pending case against the six officers involved.)

Not more than a week earlier, Moore and Gray had joked about “hooking up in prison.” Moore wanted to know when his friend could get him some good seafood.

Now, Freddie was face down on the sidewalk and on the verge of becoming a statistic. After he died a week later, his spine mangled and his larynx crushed, his name would assume a place at the center of a chain of events that would rock the city: accusations of police violence, protests, riots, curfews, standoffs between citizens and police, the charging of six officers with crimes relating to Freddie’s death, a $6.4 million city payout to his family, and a suddenly urgent national conversation about the plight of young black men like Gray who have few prospects save running in the streets.

“There are thousands of Freddie Grays in this city,” says Warren Brown, a well-known Baltimore criminal defense attorney who has represented a few, though not Gray himself.

The difference is that Gray’s story ended violently and while in the hands of police. His small-timer’s biography belonged to all the rest of those thousands of slingers, fiends, and street-corner entrepreneurs—until it didn’t.

Friends and neighbors say he was a regular guy they called “Pepper,” though no one seems to know why. He was a joker--generous, respectful, easygoing, liked to get high. He preferred name-brand designer clothes, nice wheels, pit bulls, hot girls. His short life leaves us little more than that, and yet it has become a prism that reflects every ill that plagues this city. Crushing poverty. Fatherlessness. Joblessness. Childhood lead poisoning. Housing segregation. Police brutality. The endless street-to-jail cycle and the war on drugs that feeds it.

Whether you empathize with Gray and his messy race with life, or see him as a serial lawbreaker who shares responsibility for his fate, it is a Baltimore story. Freddie Gray was a scion of the city. He was raised on its streets, poisoned by its homes, and ultimately killed by its police officers. His was a life wholly shaped by the forces that act upon thousands of other young people here, and it bears a closer look.

BREAK

That view is a bit hazy. As the legal drama surrounding his death has proceeded, members of his immediate family have been largely shielded from the media by Billy Murphy, the attorney who negotiated the settlement of their civil brutality case against the city. Several did not answer a reporter’s calls or visits for comment; Murphy also declined to speak on the record.

But here’s what we do know: Born several months prematurely along with a twin sister, Fredricka, at Maryland General Hospital 26 years ago to a mother who had been addicted to heroin, Freddie Carlos Gray Jr. grew up in slum houses in Sandtown, just a few blocks from where he was last arrested.

Gray’s father, Freddie Sr., didn’t live with Freddie, Fredricka, or an older daughter, Carolina, who also carries the Gray surname.

Before Freddie and Fredricka turned 3, their mother, Gloria Darden, filed paternity suits against Freddie Sr. He signed off on papers stating he was the twins’ father and agreed to have $40 of his wages from a job at Johns Hopkins Hospital garnished weekly for child support.

Money was always an issue for the young, broken family. Darden couldn’t read, had been expelled from middle school, and lived on a disability check. She never held a job. The employment status of the man with whom she lived (and still lives with), Richard Shipley, is unknown, though one-time neighbors say he sometimes worked in construction. At least once, when Darden was in drug treatment, their home was without food or electric service, according to court records. By the time the twins were 3, Child Protective Services had become involved with the family.

Despite their troubles, neighbors say that Darden and Shipley, who became the children’s [legal?] stepfather, did what they could to keep the family together. But the children were subject to a siege of predators, ones they couldn’t run from. At least one of them was sexually abused by someone outside of the immediate family, according to a lawyer’s testimony in an unrelated case.

Then there were the walls that closed in on Freddie and his sisters. The first 6 years of the twins’ lives were spent in homes that shed lead paint like dandruff, so the children could eat it, suck it from their hands, or breathe in its dust. From the time Freddie was 2, the family paid $300 a month for a house on North Carey St. where, they said in a court deposition, paint flaked from window sills and the walls of bedrooms and hallways.

At one point, the Gray children each had lead levels in the blood more than 7 times greater what the Centers for Disease Control say causes irreversible brain damage. In the years he lived there, Freddie’s blood maintained a level that was at least twice the CDC threshold.

Owned by Stanley Rochkind, an oft-cited inner-city landlord, the Carey Street house was home until 1996, when the family is believed to have moved one block north.

Neighbors remember young Freddie as a playful, agreeable kid. “I was devastated, I was numb to hear what happened to him,” says Rosalind Brown, who lived two doors down from the family, then moved into their Carey Street [?] home two years after they left. “He was a nice boy, always smiling.” She raises her 10-year-old grandson Dominic in Freddie’s old house., and the child attends [SCHOOL NAME TK], next to a playground dedicated to Gray in Upton. The house is safe now, she says: “They painted it up real good.”

Freddie was a thin, smallish boy who would later play wide receiver in a local football little league. Sports were a refuge for him, remembers another former neighbor, Will Tyler: “It was something to do besides run the streets.”

After Freddie entered school, he was diagnosed with ADHD, was often truant, and, along with Fredricka, attended special education classes. The pair exhibited behavioral problems. Freddie failed several grades. By YEAK TK, tests showed that Freddie was four years behind his grade level in reading. Although some published accounts say he graduated from Carver Vocational Technical High School, the nearly all-black public school that serves the Sandtown neighborhood, it appears Freddie actually dropped out in 9th grade. High school graduation was a criterion for successfully completing one of several stints on probation, including in recent years. There’s no evidence, at least in the court record, that he met that requirement.

The long-term impact of the Gray children’s lead exposure would play out in court a dozen years after they moved out of the Carey Street house. Local attorney Evan Thalenberg filed a lead paint lawsuit against Rochkind in DATE TK, asking for a combined $5 million-plus in damages, nearly $2 million for Freddie. The suit alleged that lead poisoning from living on Carey resulted in “permanent and severe brain injury” to all 3 siblings and “will prohibit the Plaintiffs from gaining in any painful occupation, activity, or pursuit, as well as from performing any duties requiring the full and normal use of their mind, body, and limbs [sic].”

The children had been treated at the Kennedy-Krieger Institute, sometimes as inpatients. Pictures presented as evidence in the lawsuit show a smiling four-year-old Freddie with his sisters against a backdrop of almost-bare walls—he looks both happy and doomed.

But the child in that photo was long gone. The twins were 18 when their lead-poisoning case was tried, and both were incarcerated by that time: They had to petition the court to allow them to wear “civilian clothes” in court.. Charges against Fredricka would ultimately be dismissed. Freddie, after saying his piece in court, went right back to jail, a place he would become too accustomed to.

BREAK

How closely could Freddie’s consistent criminality—his rap sheet shows a break in the flow of arrests only during times when he was jailed—be linked to the developmental impact of the lead-tainted blood he suffered as a kid?

Social scientists and criminologist have long posited that there is a direct link between childhood lead exposure and crime: Just as higher blood lead levels have been associated with lower IQ and struggles with learning and behavior, it also correlates with higher rates of arrests for adults, several studies have found. And many attorneys who tackle the cases of inner-city young people insist that the causal relationship is real.

“I’ve asked many of my clients, ‘Why do you have this problem? Why did you drop out in 8th grade? Why do you have this lengthy arrest record?,’” says Jill Carter, a state delegate (D-41) and defense lawyer. “Way too often, they’ll tell me they’ve been lead-poisoned.”

While his neighbors say that Gray showed few signs of impairment, one lawyer who defended him in court says the effects of lead on Freddie’s brain were manifest. “It was clear to me that there were some lead issues,” says the attorney, who did not want to be identified. “His reading and writing weren’t good. There’d be no way he could make it through college. He wasn’t unintelligent, but you wondered just how far he could go.”

A bail bondman the family hired to bail Freddie out of jail said he’d have to take over the reading of charges when Freddie stumbled over them. “He couldn’t make out words like ‘eluding’ or ‘fleeing,’” says Quinton “Toak” Reid. “He had a lot of street smarts, though. He was just trying to survive out here. People feel like they can take care of their families at age 16 by selling drugs. That’s all they can do.”

And Freddie knew his neighborhood. Sandtown-Winchester, home to around 8,500 people, is one of the city’s poorest areas. Less well known: It’s also one of the tightest. “Everybody here is cousins, almost literally,” says Reid. “This is the wrong community for something like Freddie Gray to happen because they take care of their own here.”

Though Freddie was known as “Pepper” on the street, he was just as often called “Nephew” or “Cuzz” by any number of men in the neighborhood. Mike Coner called him “Nephew” because his nieces went to school with Gray. In turn, other neighbors say, Freddie called them “Big Daddy,” “Mama,” or “Uncle.”

“Uncle” Will Tyler qualifies as a street relative because Freddie knew his daughter, Aaliyah. He runs a nonprofit that tries to keep kids busy in an era when many rec centers have closed, organizing basketball tournaments and other athletic events for Gilmor Homes youths. “I give kids a place to go,” he says. “They haven’t had one for a long time. They’re tired of their illegal activities, of being arrested all the time.”

As a young man, Gray would take part in basketball round robins that Tyler had put together, playing a variety of positions with daring and skill. “He was a good kid who did what kids do,” says Tyler. Gray had a bit of gumption, he adds: “He wasn’t lazy. He had a thing about himself. I always told Freddie he could get a job if he worked at it. The thing is he wanted to go into justice, law enforcement. When all this happened, he was looking at going to CCBC, up at Liberty.”

Tyler lives at Gilmor Homes’ southern edge, several blocks from the site of Gray’s last arrest. Freddie’s family lived in the projects for a while near his home, by Mount and Presstman, he says. There’s a balloons-and-bottles monument to a recent victim of Sandtown’s violence on that corner now, but that’s not a rarity. There are plenty more as you head north. Mount and Baker. Mount and Presbury. 1827 N. Mount. Around the corner at North and Carey. Even without the three shrines to Freddie in and around Gilmor Homes’ northern end, and the scores of dead-eyed vacants and yawning lots, it’s like wandering through a cemetery.

Yet, this place was Freddie’s life, where he hung out, loved, helped out neighbors. And, if his criminal history is to be believed, it’s where he plied his trade.

Freddie’s record as a juvenile offender, if there is one, is not available to the public. But his advent into adulthood suggests that he had already embarked on a budding career as a corner boy. Just seven days after he turned 18, when he became an adult in the eyes of the law, he was arrested for dealing heroin and lying to police. Four days later, another arrest. The next day, another bust for drug dealing, for which he’d serve a few months of hard time, and receive a suspended three-year sentence, which he’d spend instead on supervised probation.

In all, Gray would be arrested 23 times before his death. At one point, he had been busted at least 11 times during one period of probation. Almost all the charges were drug-related, usually just-large-enough amounts of heroin and cocaine to be hit with distribution charges. A few were the typical “nuisance” complaints—playing dice, hanging out in a vacant apartment. His only violent charge occurred about a year before his death, when he was accused of hitting an acquaintance.

Freddie may have been in trouble a lot, but Tyler says he did what he could to brighten things up in the neighborhood. “I last saw him four days before [his arrest] and he was playing jokes on his friends,” he adds. “You never felt threatened by him.”

Big Daddy—aka Earl “Manny” Williams—says Freddie would spread his money around. “I’m not going to say Freddie was a saint because he wasn’t, but he had a good heart. He’d look out for people, buy them groceries, that kind of thing,” says Williams, who watched Freddie grow up “chasing his friends around the neighborhood.”

“He had charisma,” adds Toak Reid. “I could tell by looking at body language. People walked behind Freddie, not alongside him.”

Another Mount Street denizen, Alethea Booze—“Mama” to Freddie—says he would make sure older neighbors had what they need. He’d walk by her stoop with his buddies on his way to King Grocery and ask her if she needed ice cream or a soda.

“When he’d have money, he’d buy some of the kids new tennis [shoes],” says Tyler. “He understood that the peer pressure is crazy around here. You don’t come up with the best clothes or tennis, you won’t be running with the hip crowd.”

The cash, or some of it, came from the monthly “lead checks” he started receiving in 2010, when the lead paint lawsuit against Rochkind produced enough evidence to encourage his lawyers to settle. Though the terms of the agreement were sealed by the court (and Thalenberg didn’t return calls), it’s clear now that each Gray sibling received a sum well into six figures, at least. Spread out over many years, such settlements may still come to only a few hundred dollars every month, but they do guarantee regular income.

In 2013, however, Freddie traded in at least a considerable part of his lead settlement for a smaller lump sum. A September investigation by *The Washington Post* found that the Gray children sold off much of their shares to Chevy Chase-based Access Funding, a company that markets to lead poisoning victims and offers immediate payouts. The sisters relinquished $435,000 in long-term checks for a one-time-only check of $54,000—about 20 cents on the dollar—while Freddie in sold $146,000 in future guarantees, valued at $94,000 at the time, for around $18,000.

The practice appears to be legal, but the story raised the hackles of public officials, including Congressman Elijah Cummings (D-7), who represents Sandtown and sees offering the lure of quick cash to mentally compromised victims of lead poisoning as predatory behavior.

Up on Bakbury Court, a group of young men sit on stoops on a hot weekday and reminisce about Freddie. They say he had the money to strut around. He liked the big brands in fashion—Gucci, Prada, 7 for All Mankind, True Religion, Under Armour, Louis Vuitton—and expensive sneakers. Though he always walked when he was in Sandtown, friends say he often had wheels, too: a van or two, plus, depending on who you talk to, an Acura, Cadillac, or Lexus. Smoking some good weed, maybe guzzling a “Gatorade”—a concoction that includes the central nervous system depressant GHB—got him through the night.

Did Gray have a drug habit? About a year ago, he was arrested for possessing a few oxycodone tablets. Several of his busts for distribution were for a relatively small amount of drugs—a possible sign that he was selling to pay for drugs for his own use. Along with evidence of marijuana use, the medical examiner found opiates in his body.

But several people who claimed to have known him say Freddie dealt drugs to help his family make it. One young man, who refused to give his name “because police will come after me,” says that he last saw Gray on the morning of his arrest. As usual, he had started his day early. “We’d get going at 6 in the morning,” he says. “We’ve got a job to do too, you know.”

One of the Bakbury guys shows a picture on his phone of Freddie mugging with arms spread, in front of four of his friends, taken almost on the same spot of his final arrest and just a few days before, looking like he couldn’t be more at home.

When Freddie took off on the morning of April 12, chased by cops on bikes, he ran toward the only oasis he knew. “He was trying to get back to the projects,” speculates Reid. “Once you’re there, you’re safe. A lot of those doors are unlocked. He could jump in, lock the door behind him. There’d be a lot of people who wouldn’t think twice about helping him.”

Even though his mother and sisters lived in better neighborhoods—Belair-Edison and Harwood, respectively—Gray never really left Sandtown. He always ended up back around Gilmor Homes.

“He wanted more than this, but he couldn’t leave us,” says Kevin Moore. “This was his place. This is where he belonged.”

He and Moore would often ponder what a new life outside the neighborhood might look like, Moore recalls. “We all want to get out of the projects. We’d talk about what it would be like to get out of Baltimore. But he died. It never happened.”

Up to the end, his neighbors kept an eye out for him.

Alethea Booze was in her kitchen on April 12 making turkey wings, greens, and mashed potatoes for when her family got back from church. She heard someone yelling down the alley. Because she had suffered a stroke and had trouble walking, she had her friend, Robin, help her down past six houses and an empty lot to see what was going on. She saw Moore and a young woman taking video of someone on the ground. Freddie. No surprise there. “I’d seen them chase him several times,” she says.

Gray was yelling in pain as one officer put his knee on the back of his neck and another pulled his legs up behind his back. Police started dragging Gray to a paddy wagon as he screamed in pain. “We said, ‘His legs are broke! Take him to the hospital!” Booze recalls. “A black cop was there. We asked him, ‘Can’t you do something?’ But he walked right by.”

Gray was put in the van, still yelling, but not buckled in. The vehicle lurched off toward the Western District police station, six blocks south, maybe a minute and a half away. It arrived 46 minutes later, after several stops. Somewhere along the way, Freddie Gray sustained the spinal cord injuries that would kill him.

“Freddie was just like a lot of guys here,” Booze says. “But he would always stop and ask me if I was doing OK. Now, his little friends do the same.”

BREAK

In late May, Major Sheree Briscoe took over the Baltimore Police Department’s Western District, home both to Sandtown-Winchester and the worst of the rioting that flared in April. A Baltimore city native and a City College grad, Briscoe now shoulders the formidable task of repairing the frayed relationship between the community and police. She takes what she calls “intentional community walks” in uniform: With her close-cropped hair, strong build, and bolt-upright posture, she cuts a warm, yet imposing figure, a combination of maternal care and no nonsense.

“When I look around Sandtown, I see a lot of nice people,” she says. “A lot of people gather on the corners just to meet. Others are doing something else. It’s our job to separate that out.”

How her officers do that job, Briscoe says, will be changing here in what is often called the Post-Freddie-Gray era. Besides introducing herself to people, she and a police captain look for housing and business code violations. They report trash heaps and overgrown lots and hand out quick-reference guides to city services. They remind people they’re entitled to those services. And they do social outreach, helping people with mental health issues and getting to know those who hang on corners. “We try to look at the problem as more than a one-laned one,” she says.

What she’s describing represents a dramatic shift from an aggressive, zero-tolerance model to a more holistic style of “community policing.” But this is a community that may be a skeptical partner. “It’s not popular to be seen holding hands with the police right now,” Briscoe says.

Not that it ever was—generations of distrust have built up in neighborhoods like this. “I need to be sincere with people to make these relationships grow,” Briscoe says. “We’ve been talking to people who’ve had trouble with the police. I feel like I need to apologize to them, even if it’s something that happened 20 years ago.”

Earl Williams tells a story about just how big a challenge Briscoe might be facing. In May, an investigator from State’s Attorney Marilyn Mosby’s office visited Sandtown to learn the circumstances surrounding Gray’s death. The investigator dropped by Mount Street and talked with Earl Williams, who told him to go back outside, lean against his car, and see what happened. Within minutes, Williams says, an officer in a passing cruiser yelled at the investigator to get off the street.

The irony is that Mosby’s office had earlier in the spring asked for police to crack down on street activity—thus contributing to the heavy-handed, stop-and-frisk style of policing the streets that residents say they have long endured. The toll of these arrests, whether successfully prosecuted or not, can be devastating: Those with police records are half as likely to find a job as those who have never been arrested, researchers have found.

This street-to-jail cycle runs rampant in places like Sandtown, where TK out of TK male residents [SHOCKING INCARCERATION STAT HERE.]“[Police] treat the courts like a dumping ground and make an ever-increasing percentage of the population unemployable,” argues defense attorney Warren Brown. “We need a Marshall Plan for these parts of Baltimore. What are the plans for uneducated, unemployed people here for the next 10 to 15 years? They’re treated like the nuclear waste from power plants. They’re contained. The police are charged with enforcing that containment.”

A. Dwight Pettit, a defense attorney who has also filed brutality lawsuits against the police, echoes that position. “I’ve seen questionable searches and seizures triple in the last 10 years,” he says. “People are running from police because they can’t afford $50 for bail, whether they are guilty of a crime or not.”

Even older Sandtown residents, who often lament that succeeding generations haven’t found real work and bring gunplay to the neighborhood, say that younger men face indignities at the hands of cops that they never should have. Around the time of Gray’s arrest, it was routine to see police jack up people on corners, Booze says. “Then, they’d pull their pants down in front of the public to search them, or taser them, or throw them on the ground,” she says. “They were getting away with murder the way they treated people.”

Since Gray’s arrest, the cops have taken a noticeable step back from the aggressive approach of clearing corners that they used prior to Gray’s death, residents say. There is a bit more breathing space. The guys on Bakbury Court aren’t noticeably impressed. (“Police is police,” says one.) But Earl Williams and others have seen improvements in how the force treats Sandtown since Briscoe’s arrival. “She comes to whatever meeting she’s invited to and listens,” Williams says. “Things are different now. I haven’t seen anybody chased in a while.”

The death of Freddie Gray—and the groundswell of protest that followed—has already spurred other changes. State laws that went into effect in October allow people arrested but not convicted of crimes to expunge their records. Petty marijuana convictions can now be wiped clean as well. A “Second Chances Act” shields nonviolent misdemeanor convictions from public view after a 3- to 7-year period, giving offenders a better shot at finding jobs. In August, the state’s Department of Justice issued new law enforcement guidelines that strongly condemn racial profiling by police, making Maryland the first state to follow the federal guidelines banning discriminatory profiling issued in December 2014.

City officials are looking to extend the Safe Streets anti-violence program to Sandtown. The program, based on the principles of violence interruption pioneered by Chicago’s CeaseFire program, employs former offenders to defuse neighborhood disputes before they escalate. The program been shown to be effective in lowering gun violence in the 6 sites where it has been used, but it’s also been rocked by troubles, most recently in July when police found guns and drugs stashed in an East Baltimore program site office.

A constellation of programs, conferences, classes, and seminars now carry Freddie Gray’s name, all part of a citywide conversation about what needs to be done. At the University of Maryland School of Law, a new course called “Freddie Gray’s Baltimore: Past, Present and Moving Forward” will become an ongoing part of the curriculum.

The school has expanded its work in Sandtown and neighborhoods like it in the past year, linking up with nonprofit groups and a student bar association to teach kids from four urban high schools their legal rights. More than 50 sat in while Marilyn Mosby and others told them about their constitutional protections; a separate program led by law students holds workshops for middle school kids on freedom of speech.

Freddie’s old bondman, Toak Reid, says he’s getting involved with the law school’s efforts to inform kids of how to behave when confronted by police. He hopes to reach a new generation of West Baltimore schoolchildren, he says, “so they don’t run like Freddie did.”

SIDEBAR

HED: The Worst City In America To Be Born Poor

DEK: Young, poor, male, and Baltimorean: As bad as it gets?

Merely by being raised in a low-income Baltimore neighborhood, Freddie Gray was lost in a sea of disadvantage. A pair of Harvard economics professors produced a study in May (<http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/images/nbhds_paper.pdf>) that showed that boys who grow up in poor Baltimore families later earn 1.4 percent less as adults for every year they’ve lived in impoverished areas. For Freddie, who spent his entire childhood (defined in the study as 20 years) in Sandtown, that meant he could expect 28 percent less in total adult income than children from average situations during his working life.

What’s more, Baltimore ranked worst among the nation’s 100 largest cities or counties in this regard. The city fits all too neatly into a pattern the Harvard professors, Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren, discovered during their research of 5 million families who moved from one city or county to another: Racially segregated areas surrounded by suburban sprawl are especially vulnerable to growing kids who are more likely to have dire adulthoods.

Girls suffer too, losing about six percent in earnings as adults. But the effect on boys is especially stark, says Chetty. “What’s troublesome is that the situation we described in the study also generally means that those kids will later be faced with a higher probability of jail time, drug use, and teen pregnancies. All of these things seem to go together.”

The study doesn’t offer a template for avoiding such situations, though it strongly hints that the children of families who get out of neighborhoods like Sandtown do better. Children who eventually live in better areas earn higher incomes in their 20s, the study found, with each year lived in what the researchers call “higher-mobility communities” contributing to higher earnings.