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## Is Chicago helpless?

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Michigan Avenue, Magnificent Mile. A luscious spring Sunday, plenty of reasons to stroll outdoors. And Chicagoans relishing every moment.

Except, that is, for four girls and a boy, ages 11 to 15, who were shot late Sunday on Michigan Avenue. In the block at 6600 South. Same day, same street. For their agony, those five young people are on the roster of victims of Chicago violence.

[At least nine dead, 36 wounded](#). On Easter Weekend.

If this happened in almost any American locale, it would be deemed outrageous and unacceptable. In Chicago, it can be nothing less.

Organized crime gave this city the shoot-'em-up reputation that today's carnage reinforces. Look at five children shot, look at nine toe tags, and see how far we haven't come:

Eighty-five years ago, after the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, this page asked: "The butchering of seven men by open daylight raises this question for Chicago: Is it helpless?"

This isn't the time to look at annual murder numbers, which have been in decline. Or to criticize Chicago cops, who didn't pull these triggers. Or at federal authorities who have done much to contain gangs, guns and drugs, and now will organize [a new anti-violence scheme](#). Or at any other avenue that shifts blame from where it squarely belongs. We write much here about violence, about strategies, about body counts. But after a weekend such as this, we ask that each resident of metropolitan Chicago focus on Monday's words from a mayor who [undeniably cut to the heart of this rampant bloodshed](#):

"Every child deserves a childhood, regardless of where they live. But to do that, our city and community, the neighborhoods that make up this city, cannot live by a code of silence. They have to live by a moral code. Now I've read some of this, and I just want to say this, when some people go: 'Well, it's the weather.' It's whether you have values."

We hope that's the revival of a perennial conversation in this city, not a fleeting bromide. It's a theme we've touched on in working toward [a new Plan of Chicago](#). That will continue.

The weekend's dismal work was not that of a singular mad person or a serial killer or some other eccentric freak. This was the work of dozens of Chicagoans, many of them young. They have

come of age in Chicago believing *as individuals* that gunplay and cruelty and then flight to safety can suit them just fine.

As Sunday closed and later, as Monday lengthened, we heard Chicago scramble for scapegoats, and for solutions. About lawmakers who won't pass the right bills. About judges who put people arrested for gun crimes back on the street. About this city's endless search for ways to disrupt trafficking in firearms.

But we didn't hear enough talk that picked up where the mayor left off. We didn't hear enough, that is, about instilling radically different values in the marauders who now rule too many of Chicago's streets — with "too many" defined as "at least one."

This week all of us have to answer to the gory weekend that was. We have to answer to our collective inability to help, or educate, or cajole, or crack down, in ways that would allow five youngsters to walk safely on any mile of Michigan Avenue.

And we have to answer to this:

Is Chicago helpless?

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