



n January 2 of this year, the Baltimore Police Department sent out its annual analysis of the city's homicides: in 2018, there were 309. The majority of the victims were killed in the street and almost sixty percent died from a gunshot wound to the head. Ninety-four percent were black men.

The analysis also included data on the criminal records of the victims. The vast majority of homicide victims had been arrested before. One in four were either on parole or probation when they died.

“We get it, bad people killing bad people, right?” the *Baltimore Sun*'s editorial board wrote, criticizing the police department's report. “The department seems to be assigning some blame to the victims rather than assessing its own inability to bring the violence under control.”

But such victim-blaming from the police department hints, unwittingly, at a more fundamental, and paradoxical, problem: The police are uniquely unqualified to protect the people dying violent deaths in Baltimore because they are often also out to arrest them. Cooperating with law enforcement is often morally and practically unthinkable for the city's most vulnerable, and it's similarly absurd to think police will safeguard the same people at whom they regularly point their guns.

It's not just Baltimore, either. Around the world, people who commit crime tend to be crime victims as well. Policing can't solve that riddle.

The pioneering victimologist Hans Von Hentig's 1948 book *The Criminal and His Victim* is a dubious artifact, complete with lengthy analyses of the relationship