

# Justice hard to find in ‘lawless’ suburb

Harvey’s violent crime and low arrest rates are unmatched in the region, a stain that can be traced from there all the way to D.C.

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A young rape victim tormented by the attacker the police wouldn’t pick up. Heartbroken parents left to solve their children’s slayings. Good Samaritans humiliated after catching a thief.

The numbers tell one story about Harvey: a suburb 20 miles south of the Loop that is unmatched in Chicagoland — even by the most dangerous urban neighborhoods — for its stark blend of violent crime levels and low arrest rates.

But the victims, and their survivors, tell even more vivid tales of getting little justice from Harvey’s scandal-plagued Police Department and mostly shrugs from outside agencies unwilling to intercede.

“They say, ‘Oh, that’s Harvey,’ ” said Marsha Lee, whose son was fatally shot in Harvey. “Well, I don’t understand how Harvey is allowed to operate.”

A three-part Tribune investigation has traced some answers to decisions made in Chicago, Springfield and Washington.

Federal officials played a key role in helping the mayor stay in power even as he fought blame for the city’s problems. Other federal officials documented widespread policing problems, then did little to force reform.

At the state level, officials let Harvey leaders break already tepid transparency and disclosure laws, while doing less to regulate cops than cosmetologists.

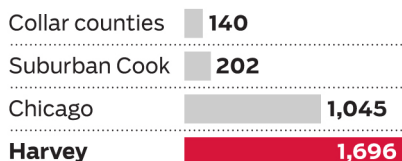
Critics say the result is a city where residents are victimized three times — by criminals, by dysfunctional policing and finally by outsiders turning a blind eye.

Over the next few days, the Tribune will show how dysfunctional the suburb has become and how the system aided and abetted its descent into arguably the most lawless community in the Chicago area.



ANTONIO PEREZ/TRIBUNE PHOTO

## VIOLENT CRIME RATE IN 2011



Note: Rate is per 100,000 residents

SOURCE: Tribune analysis of most recent comparable state data

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Marsha Lee and her ex-husband, Thomas, stand outside a convenience store in Harvey where their son Tommy Lee was fatally shot during what they were told was a botched robbery in 2008.