

# Hardening Yourself Against Criminal Predators

BY AQUIL BASHEER

**A**s Hakim left the house, he noticed an unfamiliar vehicle parked down the street; an automobile that he had seen in the neighborhood for the last couple of days.

He had a special awareness of the car because it appeared to be *too* conspicuous. He glanced at it as he drove by and made a mental note to himself to check it out later. He was gnawed by a gut feeling.

When he returned home, he noticed the car again; parked on the other side of the street. That was a target evaluation. He saw what appeared to be three men in their early to late twenties inside the vehicle. As he passed, he looked at the men, noticing that they made it a point to stare back at him. That was the challenge. So Hakim looked away, not wanting to provoke an altercation or negative response—the stand down.

Two days later, Hakim saw the same car again. One of the occupants he had seen inside of the vehicle a day before was outside at the front of the car talking to Mrs. Jones, one of his neighbors (selection), and they seemed to be engaged in a lively conversation (befriending).

As Hakim passed her, she gave him a hearty wave, and he felt relieved. (the denial) Hakim assumed that this day, as well as the other days he'd noticed the men and their vehicle, that they were there to see Mrs. Jones.

Pulling into his driveway, Hakim even noticed that the young men and Mrs. Jones were shaking hands; making physical contact). He thought to himself: "well, if Mrs. Jones knows these guys, they must be okay"—acceptance. Hakim concluded, "all is well."

Two of the most important principles for street survival were ignored in the aforementioned scenario. When you empower yourself as a street survivalist you realize there are certain "rules" or "laws" that you will have to put into action and abide by if you are going to survive.

The first rule ignored was the concept of "Target Hardening", that is, perceiving yourself as prey and identifying—as well as isolating—every possible flaw or weakness you can discover. This evaluation should relate to you, your procedures and where you live. This is known as the "Three Ps" formula.

Personally, you evaluate your demeanor; how you stand, move, walk, talk, dress and interact. Is it something you say or do that would attract crime or violence to you?

Procedurally you must look at where you go, how you park your vehicle, what you do with personal information, what type of patterns you set, how you place yourself in public and in the workplace, how you enter and control, or not control specific locales.

From the prospective of where you live, do you leave indications that show your home is open? You are not at home but your home invites individuals to come on in anyway (showing off your house), leaving personal information to be found, easy access, habitual patterns, and easy egress or entry.

If survival of violence is the objective, it then becomes imperative that you see yourself through the mindset of someone that seeks to destroy you and anyone else within his crosshairs.

Remember destruction, inclusive of lack of response, is the goal of the criminal predator. Your goal is to: "recognize your vulnerable areas before your adversary does," then reinforce these areas with aggressive, straight forward and responsive strategies.

I have explained time and again that those

who use violence first implement an effective plan, then train to be successful.

Look at the scenario: 1. Surveillance was done. 2. Target was selected. 3. Prey was watched and evaluated. 4. Target was challenged. 5. Verbal and physical contact was made. 6. Attack was implemented!

The second law that was not adhered to was the concept of "Minimizing the Opportunity." Let's be extremely clear: one who uses severe violence on an individual, group of people, or in a public arena, has developed an ideology that justifies everything he or she does.

Criminal predators feel that they have every right to be as vicious, sadistic, and ferocious as they possibly can.

We should realize that today's violence plays for keeps! We'd better start understanding that we are not involved in a game that says if we lose we can go back and start over again.

Minimizing the opportunity means we realize the only area of a criminal predator to which we have any degree of control, are his "preconceived notion," that we are going to be his target or his prey.

Understanding this means that we must reduce—if not eliminate—any opportunity we might provide for this criminal predator to use against us. We must "Lessen the opportunity to be looked upon as a target."

When Hakim received the call from his sister-in-law, he did not know what to make of it. She was talking about the home invasion and assault that transpired at his home a few hours earlier. It made him feel extremely weak. He could not believe what she was saying.

Apparently two to three armed men forced their way into your home where they robbed, beat, and brutally raped Mrs. Jones (she was placed in the restricted intensive care unit at the local hospital where she is

on life support).

The only reason she is still alive is because your children happened to escape out of a back window (the practiced fire drill that you and your wife made them go through the month earlier) where they ran to Mrs. Jones house, who in turn had already notified the police (She had been left for dead).

As you read this story, there should be fundamental survival questions that you are asking yourself. Where did Hakim go wrong? What could he have done to change the situation? Should he have perceived a troubling crisis and taken appropriate action?

These are all sound questions but, unfortunately, they are after the fact! These questions should have been posed long before the disaster eventuated.

There were numerous "signs" and "signals" that foretold of a pending crisis but they were all ignored!

If only the two basic concepts that we've discussed had been utilized, this tragedy of violence could have been avoided.

In future articles I will discuss key terms used in this exposition that play an extremely important part in building the blueprint for violence deterrence. Each term by itself should dictate the need to put into place a certain action response.

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