

[Send to Printer](#)[<< Back to Article](#)

## Local

Pigtown residents fight to take back streets



(Stephen Janis/Examiner)

Thomas Gamble, a member of Wayman Memorial AME Church in Baltimore City, said he invites prostitutes into the church for food and prayer. Other Pigtown residents report license plates of 'johns' vehicles to the police and post them on a Web site.

Stephen Janis, The Examiner

2008-08-13 07:00:00.0

Current rank: # 621 of 4,982

### BALTIMORE -

A woman who calls herself Ashley stands in front of Wayman Memorial [AME Church](#) on Wednesday near the corner of Washington Boulevard and Carey Street in [Baltimore's Pigtown](#) neighborhood.

Dressed in cutoff jeans and black T-shirt, she waves as a large sport utility vehicle passes by. The truck slows, but then suddenly pulls away.

"I don't date," she says, walking toward the Charles Carroll Barrister Elementary School, where she sits on a bench near an empty school playground.

"I don't get in with men I don't know. I just wait for my regulars to show," she says, before waving at another passing pickup truck.

For residents of this close-knit city community a mile from the Inner Harbor, prostitutes like Ashley are a menace, luring men from the suburbs into the area for a quick encounter in back alleys.

"She'll just jump into a car if you leave the door unlocked, I've seen her," says a Pigtown resident, watching Ashley from across the street.

The resident, who did not want to give her name out of fear, says prostitution has torn the community apart.

"They can't even let the kids out onto the playground during school, because the prostitutes are always out there, 24/7. It's terrible," she says.

Calling police has not stopped the street action, residents say.

"I'm moving out," says another woman who refused to give her name.

"They drive right down the streets and into the abandoned lots to have sex. I have two children; they can't even go outside."

Other residents are fighting back with a blog called Baltimore John Watch. On the site, residents are marking down license numbers of cars that stop in front of the women, and write the details anonymously at [baltimorejohnwatch.blogspot.com](http://baltimorejohnwatch.blogspot.com). The postings provide the make, model, license number and even description of the customer.

"Caucasian male doing laps around Charles Carroll Barrister Elementary School. This guy is a regular and frequently picks up hookers and parks in the vicinity of the elementary school," writes one poster, who also includes the license number of the john's pickup.

[Christine Smith](#), a member of Wayman Memorial AME Church, says members also have been writing down license plate numbers and giving them to police.

"We really felt that we had to do something. It was just getting to be too much."

The johns, who call themselves “mongers,” appear undeterred by the added attention, but some say Pigtown residents are invading their privacy by sharing their license plate on the Internet. Others say they are the victims, because they are sex addicts.

“For some of us, this is an addiction no different than the SW [streetwalker] with the crack habit. Some of us cruise daily at all hours of the day,” wrote a john on the message board called USASexGuide Forum, an anonymous message board used by johns to trade graphic photos of prostitutes and share tips on how to beat gruesome staph infections.

At least one resident says he thinks he has the answer: Prayer.

Wayman church member [Thomas Gamble](#) says he invites the prostitutes in for worship and a hot meal.

“We feed the spirit, and then the body,” says Gamble, 57, a church trustee.

Gamble says many of the women simply need a reason to stop selling their bodies.

“I found a prostitute and said I would pray for her, and she started crying,” recalls Gamble. “She said nobody loves her enough to pray for her.

“But I told her God loves her, and that’s enough.”

[sjanis@baltimoreexaminer.com](mailto:sjanis@baltimoreexaminer.com)

*Examiner*