



# Crime Observatory Newsletter

"No Violence - Jus' Bat  
for Peace"

Volume 2 Issue 1

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## Controlling Interpersonal Violence and Preventing Homicide in Jamaica

Police statistics have indicated that reprisal is a major crime motive. Persons have become more bent on revenge and have lost faith in the formal justice system, using violence as an avenue of recourse. Recognizing this, Professor Anthony Harriott has spearheaded a study titled *Controlling Interpersonal Violence and Preventing Homicide in Jamaica* whose general objective is to reduce the incidence of homicide that results from revenge seeking and to develop methods and mechanisms for neutralizing these conflicts in lawful and non-coercive ways grounded in community codes of behaviour.

The project seeks to identify communities that are at risk, explore the dynamics of interpersonal violence, map the process of escalation into homicide and develop an intervention model that will control violence.

The study is being conducted in the communities of Rose Town, Wilton Gardens/Rema, Denham Town and at the Kingston Public Hospital. These communities were selected based on the high levels of homicide, high rate of violent injuries recorded by the Jamaica Injury Surveillance System and GIS and the willingness of the community to part take in the process. It has a two tier approach; *quantitative*, which is carried out at the hospital (screening questionnaire, conflict history and event history) and *qualitative*

which traces behavioural patterns in the community.

The pretest conducted in 2004 revealed that most of the incidents of hospital-presented violence were interpersonal and conflict driven and 76 - 80% of the assailants were known by the victim.

Results also indicated that approximately 59% of recidivist victims reported that they would try to retaliate, while only 35% of first time victims wished to do so.

Additionally, victims of violence are less likely to report their victimization to the police and if they do, they are less likely to feel satisfied with the

efforts of the police. The assumptions made from the project are: 1) more problematic victims are likely to be part of a problem relationship or tied to the offender by event histories 2) event histories and problem relationships suggest opportunities for intervention and prevention as these provide clear warning signs 3) victims of violence are viewed as an active agent whose behaviour may be implicated in the conflict and therefore have the capacity to initiate further

violence and 5) victims tend to share many characteristics with their offenders.

A major challenge the project has thus far identified is revenge; approximately 40% of the sample had the view that the resort to self-help violence is a just and appropriate response and that they would actively try to retaliate against their victimizer. Additionally, 82% felt that their victimizer should be punished. Only 15% were willing to forgive and 15% felt that the offender was justified in using violence.



Picture taken in Rose Town by Rainford Williams of the "To Shoot or not to Shoot, Click is the Answer" Photography Project during the Summer of 2006.

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## Safe School Programme's School/Community Consultation



Students from Cornwall College participating in a discussion led by Supt. Watson of the Jamaica Constabulary Force.

The Safe School Programme of the Ministry of National Security hosted School/Community Consultation in Montego Bay on March 22, 2007 at Cornwall College. Organizations/group represented included the Ministries of National Security and Health, Transformation Team of the Ministry of Education, PALS, the Jamaica Constabulary Force, students, teachers, principals and board members from various high schools and a few community members. The aim of this consultation was to engage the audience in a discussion on the following issues: 1)How can the school be made safer 2)Things that make the

school unsafe 3)How the community can assist the school to meet its goals in becoming safe 4)How the school through its facilities can assist the community.

The audience was broken down into small groups where these topics were discussed under the guidance of facilitators. The major concern of the groups was the physical safety of the school's compound. They thought that if their schools had proper parameter fencing, this would significantly contribute to them being safer. Another suggestion that was highlighted was to involve members of the community in school projects thus empowering them to

take responsibility of the school property. Other factors include poor nutrition of children which has a detrimental impact on their performance and conduct and lack of training of teachers to deal with psychological needs of students.

With regards to the relationship between the school and community, the PTA was cited as having an integral role in its improvement. Also, persons thought that the school could assist the community by providing free after school classes for individuals who are lacking educational qualification.

Similar consultations will be held in the Kingston Western area as well as in Spanish Town.

### Upcoming Events

- PMI's 1st Annual Congress for Peace and Justice on May 21, 2007 @ Jamaica Conference Centre
- Monthly Crime Observatory meeting - May 2, 2007 @ 9:30 am sharp

## Crime Statistics Update

According to the statistics of major crimes received from Mr. Delroy Hewitt, Superintendent in charge of the Kingston Western Police Division, during the period of March 23 – April 27, 2007, there has been 22 murders, 20 cases of shootings, 3 cases of robbery, 1 case of homicide, no rape nor carnal abuse and 8

cases of police criminal confrontations.

During the period of January to April 30, 2007, there has been 58 murders, an increase of 132% compared to the previous year; 57 cases of shootings, an increase of 375% compared to the previous period; 10 cases of robberies, a decrease of 57%; 7 cases of rape, an increase of 17%; 4 cases of

carnal abuse, an increase of 33% compared to the previous year; 6 cases of breaking, a decrease of 25% and larceny remained the same for both year (one case for both periods). With regards to police criminal confrontations, reports indicate that there were 24 cases for the period of January - April, 2007.

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## PMI's 1st Annual Congress for Peace and Justice

The Peace Management Initiative under the patronage of the Political Ombudsman Bishop Herro Blair will be hosting their 1st Annual Congress for Peace and Justice under the theme "Swelling the River of Peace" on May 21, 2007 at the Jamaica Conference Centre. The aim of the congress is to highlight the work being carried out by various actors in the society to reduce and prevent the use of violence in our communities. The focus will be on the upcoming election and the commitment of leaders at all levels in the society to promote a violence free and safe election. The congress is expected to target 1000 peace delegates which include community persons, agencies, representatives, members of the business sector and the media island wide. Among the topics to be explored at the conference include "Galvanizing Civil Society", "Supporting Peaceful Elections" and "Community Organization and Inter-Agency Cooperation".

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