

Race and Serious Crime in Trinidad and Tobago

Reality and the Manufactured Reality of Racist Discourse

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The Reality and the Discourses of racist hate!

The Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census, Demographic Report ⁽¹⁾ states that in 2011 the population of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) was 1,328,019 persons with East Indian being 35.4% of the population, African 34.2% of the population, Mixed 22.8% of the population and other ethnic groups being 1.4% of the population. This 1.4% of population was enumerated as follows: Caucasian 0.59%, Chinese 0.30%, Indigenous 0.11%, Syrian-Lebanese 0.08% and Other 0.17%. Amongst respondents 6.22% did not state their ethnic group.

An analysis of the statistics generated by the T&T Police Service on the race of victims and offenders for the following serious crimes: Murder, Sexual Offences, Robbery, Kidnapping, Wounding/Shooting and for offenders only for the serious crime of Possession of Narcotics for Trafficking will reveal the dynamics of race and crime amongst victims and the perpetrators. The nature of this dynamic will throw light on the social order of T&T especially on the power relations of the social order, how they impact the races and the process by which the perceptions and worldview of individuals are constituted.

The total number of victims reported for the period 2012-2016 was: 12,758 and on the basis of the race of victim the rankings were: (1) Africans 49.69% (6,340) of the total, (2) East Indians were 27.01% (3,447), (3) Mixed 17.29% (2,206), (4) Chinese 1.26% (161), (5) Caucasian 0.58% (75), (6) Spanish (40), Japanese (1) and not Stated 3.82% (488). Where the TT Police Service statistics match those of the 2011 Census it is clearly evident that the second largest race in T&T, African, is way overrepresented in the crime victims profile of T&T for the period under study. Africans comprised 34.2% of the population in 2011 but accounted for 49.69% of crime victims for the period whilst East Indians comprised 35.4% of the population in 2011 but accounted for 27.01% of crime victims for the period. The Mixed grouping comprised 22.8% of the population in 2011 but accounted for 17.29% of crime victims for the period. For the three major race groups Africans are the most predominant victims of crime with the Mixed group showing a higher propensity to be victimised compared to East Indians with the East Indians having the lowest propensity as they are the largest race group in the national population. Grave questions then arise from this reality! One other race group indicates that their crime victim percentage outstrips their percentage of national

population according to the 2011 census. The Chinese with 1.26% (161) of total victims for the period with a population of 0.30% of national population. The Caucasian group with 0.58% (75) of victims for the period with a population size of 0.59% was nearly on par for the period. Analysis of the crime victims profile by race and crime type will show the differences in the profile of these two minority race groups with Africans.

Crime Victims by Race and Crime Type

Murder

For the period there were 859 murders with 81.25% (698) of victims being African, 12.68 % (109) were East Indian, 5.70% were Mixed (49), 0.11 (1) Caucasian, 0.11% (1) Japanese and 0.11% (1) Chinese. For the period Africans were murdered at the rate of over twice their percentage of national population. The number of African murder victims not only surpassed their percentage of national population it was in fact overdetermined given the position of Africans in the social order. The largest race group the East Indian was a far second to the African and the Mixed ranked third.

Sexual Offences

For the period 2,798 sexual offences were recorded with Africans being 47.99% (1,343) of victims, 22.80% (632) Mixed, 22.58% (628) East Indian, 0.10% (3) Spanish, Caucasian 0.07% (2) and Not stated 6.46% (48). For this serious crime Africans again are the largest contributors of victims which outstrip their percentage of national population which means that Africans are overrepresented in the category of victims of sex crimes. The mixed race grouping and the East Indian grouping are practically neck and neck in victims but the East Indian grouping is the largest race grouping in the society. In fact, the percentage of victims of the Mixed grouping is on par with its percentage of national population.

Robbery

For the period 7,305 robbery victims were recorded for the period with Africans being 43.06% (3,146) of victims, next were East Indians with 32.96% (2,408), then Mixed with 16.90% (1235), Chinese 2.14% (157), Caucasian 0.97% (71), Spanish 0.92% (34) and Not stated 1.14% (254). Again the African group is the largest

single contributor of victims and overrepresented in the crime category whilst the robbery rate against the Chinese outstripped their percentage of the population as did the Caucasian group. One can posit that the presence of the Chinese and the Caucasian groups in these categories is as a result of their comparative wealth advantage compared to other race groups. If this was the only operative rationale in this crime type, why then are Africans in the apex position of victims in this crime category?

Kidnapping

There was a total of 362 kidnapping victims for the period with African victims accounting for 46.13% (167) of victims followed by East Indians with 30.11% (109) then Mixed with 19.88% (72), Chinese 0.55% (2), Caucasian 0.27% (1), Spanish 0.27% (1) and Not stated 2.76% (10). Again Africans are the highest number of victims with their percentage of victims outstripping their percentage of national population. This is a trend that illustrates a specific reality of the social order that deals with perception, worldview and human action choices and the collapse of hegemonic social control. The Chinese is the next group where the percentage of victims in this crime type surpasses their percentage of national population. Apparently the choice of victims is not determined by the wealth of the victims and their families on a comparative basis.

Wounding/Shooting Victims

For the period of the study there was a total of 1,434 wounding/shooting with Africans being 68.75% (986) of victims followed by the Mixed group with 14.78% (212) of victims, next East Indians with 13.17% (189), Spanish 0.13% (2), Chinese 0.06% (1), Caucasian 0 with Not stated 3.06% (44). In this final serious crime type the trend continues of Africans being the apex victim of serious crime in T&T with the overwhelming victims of the flood of illicit small arms in T&T being Africans. With over 68% of victims of wounding/shooting for the period being African it points to the level of violence especially gun violence that on a daily basis impacts the safety, security and development of Africans and African communities in T&T.

This level of victimhood amounts to daily life in a war zone with all its adverse effects on the quality of human life across generations. The survival mechanisms that humans create in war zones reflect the interplay between perceptions of threats and the human action choices visualised and made. In war zones human

choices made can contribute to intensifying the problem that is why effective, relevant intervention is crucially necessary by the state.

The percentage of African victims of serious crime way outstrips the percentage of the Africans of the national population which means that Africans as a race are overrepresented in the ranks of the victims of serious crime in T&T. The rate of African victimhood over the years is now contributing to the ongoing cycle of violence as the trauma and assault on family stability that flows from such high levels of victimisation drives the search for safety, stability, coping with trauma and vengeance. One coping mechanism available to those victimised directly or indirectly is the thug/gangsta life or the Life. The Life offers instruments and institutions towards realising the quest for the coping mechanism and the overarching coping structure with its own hegemonic discourse, power relations and power elite. The Life exercises hegemony over spaces, humans and worldviews as a result of the failure of the state to address the endemic violence, victimisation and to fill the need for licit coping mechanisms that challenge effectively the unrelenting quest of the Life for hegemony. The state, the ruling politicians and the agencies of the state under the control of the ruling politicians have all failed miserably. As a result, the violence now has a momentum of its own with a rhyme and reason of its own and the state and the politicians are powerless to break the cycle hence the resort to blaming the victims. The politics of race in T&T spawn arrogant politicians who simply don't pay the political price for their failure to ensure the safety, peace and stability of their electoral base.

Race and the Perpetrators of Serious Crime

The reality of race and victims of crime must now be linked to the reality of race and perpetrators of crime to create the complete landscape of crime minus the choice of human action made and the range of possible reasons for the choices made.

Murder

For the period there was a total of 270 perpetrators of murder recorded which illustrates the low detection rate. Africans accounted for 77.40% (209) of perpetrators, East Indians 16.66% (45) and the Mixed group 5.72% (16). Africans were then the largest single group of murder perpetrators with a rate that far

outstrips their percentage of national population. Africans are overrepresented as perpetrators in this crime type.

Sexual Offences

For the period there were 929 perpetrators of sexual offences with Africans accounting for 54.57% (507) of perpetrators followed by East Indians with 22.28% (207) then the Mixed group with 17% (158) and finally Spanish 0.96% (9). The Not Stated was 5.16% (48). The trend of the race of perpetrators is mirroring that of the trend of Africans being the apex victim.

Possession of Narcotics for Trafficking

A total of 1,282 persons were listed as perpetrators of this crime type with Africans being 51.56% (661) of perpetrators followed by East Indians 23.55% (302) then the Mixed group 21.13% (271). Next was Caucasian 0.62% (8) then Spanish 0.54% (7) with Not Stated 5.16% (33). In keeping with the trend Africans are the dominant perpetrators of this serious crime and Caucasian having a level of perpetrators that exceeds their percentage of national population. The Mixed group had a perpetrator level very close to its percentage of national population whilst the East Indian has a perpetrator level well below its percentage of national population.

Robbery

There was a total of 2,699 perpetrators of robbery for the period. Africans accounted for 68.61% (1,852), Mixed 16.85% (455), East Indian 12.18% (329), Spanish 0.92% (25), Caucasian 0.03 (1) and Not Stated 1.13% (31). Another instance where perpetrators from the African population dominate this crime type and are overrepresented as a race group. The Mixed group was the second largest group of perpetrators in this crime type.

Kidnapping

A total of 201 perpetrators for the period was recorded. The African group was the overwhelming, dominant group for this crime with 60.69% (122) next was East Indian 18.90% (38), then Mixed 15.92% (32), Spanish 0.48% (1) with Not Stated 3.98% (8). There were no Caucasian and Chinese perpetrators for this crime type. Another instance of the trend of African dominance of perpetrators

and another crime type where the Mixed group when their percentage of the national population is factored in are the second place group of perpetrators by race.

Wounding/Shooting

The total number of perpetrators for the period was 459. The African group accounted for 65.64% (300) followed by the Mixed group 18.16% (83) which was followed by East Indian 13.78 (63), Spanish 0.47% (1) and Not stated 1.98% (9). There were no perpetrators for the Caucasian and Chinese groups. Yet another instance where the African group dominated the perpetrator profile of a crime type way in excess of its percentage of national population resulting in the African group being overrepresented in the perpetrator profile of this crime type. The Mixed group is the second placed group in the perpetrator profile of this crime type.

The essential reality is now depicted the crux of the matter is now to understand the dynamics of this reality and offer attempts at explanation that are derived from reality on the ground not from the manufactured reality of the politicians, the state agencies and the ass kissing academics in their quest for fat research grants and consultancies.

It's clearly apparent to anyone who understands the evolution of the illicit drug trade of T&T and its impact on people, families, communities and the legitimacy of the state that the reality depicted by the crime statistics is predominantly the product of the illicit trades and the impunity it wields over vast stretches of the human geography of Trinidad where large segments of the African and Mixed populations live. This hegemony has constituted a worldview, a Life, a range of choice and chosen human action with its attendant body of perceptions. This is now the basis of recruitment to the Life as one can be external of the economy of the Life but you view the world and act in the world in keeping with the norms and values of the Life. This is best seen in the school age population. The violence is now endemic but that doesn't mean that the violence is as a result of conflict within the economy of the Life. The violence flows from the order of the Life and it impacts negatively the economy of the Life as it's bad for business but the hands of the oligarchy/rankers of the Life are also tied. The Frankenstein monster created by political failure is now out of control.

Victims and Perpetrators

For the period there was a total of 12,758 victims of the serious crimes listed juxtaposed against a total of 5,838 perpetrators of serious crimes listed. There were 6,340 victims, 49.69% of total victims, of the African group and 3,651 perpetrators, 62.53% of total perpetrators, of the African group. It is apparent that the perpetrators of the African group are the dominant perpetrators of serious crime against the African group i.e. African on African crime. There were 3,447 victims, 27.01% of the total victims, of the East Indian group and 984 perpetrators, 16.85% of the total perpetrators, of the East Indian group. There were 2,206 victims, 17.29% of the total victims, of the Mixed group and 1,015 perpetrators, 17.38% of the total perpetrators, of the Mixed group. There were 75 Caucasian victims, 0.58% of total victims, and 9 Caucasian perpetrators, 0.15% of total perpetrators. There were 161 Chinese victims, 1.26% of total victims and 0 Chinese perpetrators making the Chinese the quintessential victims of crime in T&T. There were 40 Spanish victims, 0.31% of total victims, and 44 Spanish perpetrators, 0.75% of total perpetrators. There was 1 Japanese victim with no Japanese perpetrator/s. There were 488 victims, 3.82% of total victims, where their race was Not Stated and 173 perpetrators, 2.96% of total perpetrators where their race was Not Stated.

The perpetrators from the African group are then responsible for the largest single bloc of serious crime perpetrated against Africans. The Mixed group has the second largest group of perpetrators and is engaged in the trend as the African group which will saturate this group given its smaller percentage of the national population. The East Indian group whilst in third place is showing signs of waking up in specific crime types which indicates and affirms the change underway on the ground and the nature of the future that is unfolding.

The Explanations

The explanations circulating in the public domain since the 1990s view Afro Trinbagonians through a racist, hegemonist discourse whether the talking heads are Africans or not.

One strain views the African as subhuman with a propensity to violence, criminal activity and engaged in a strategy to cleanse T&T of non-African races. Crime perpetrated by Africans against non-African races of T&T is the means to

dominate the race structure of T&T with graphic violence. East Indians, Caucasians and the Chinese are the strategic targets of this African criminal onslaught. All evidence presented to show that Africans are predominantly victimising Africans means nothing to this racist agenda in fact it's perfectly acceptable and strategic in the quest for racist hegemony. This discourse insists that Africans in T&T are criminogenic therefore unfit to exercise power so it must be exercised on Africans by non-Africans.

The dominant discourse in the public domain is articulated by Africans which posits without evidence that the breakdown of African families, values and communities is pushing predominantly African males into criminality. But this is a lower class, at risk individuals and single parent family phenomenon as middle class Africans are not showing this propensity to criminality. As a result of this discourse entire swaths of urban communities where Africans are the dominant race are now at risk communities with at risk individuals which then become crime "hot spots" because of the gang problem. This discourse and its African by DNA only articulators is insisting that lower class, urban Africans are in fact criminogenic and this discourse is used to justify a slew of policing methods which doesn't challenge the power of the bad boys over the urban space. This discourse only alienates, breeds fear, powerlessness, anger and rage, to the point of grown men reduced to tears in public when speaking of the manner in which the police deal with them on a daily basis, amongst the residents who want a new life free of the bad boys and colonial policing. But the Africans by DNA only insist that the victims are to blame because we don't inform but we know by experience the wages of informing is DEATH! The victims are blamed for their victimisation another powerful indicator that the discourse is racist as it views Africans as incapable of disciplined adherence to western norms and values unlike the DNA only Africans and for this intransigence they will be punished.

The salient question remains unanswered which is: what development/s **ONLY** in the daily life of the African dominated urban communities resulted in the reality where Africans are the overwhelming victims and perpetrators of serious crime in T&T? These developments impacted **only** the African urban communities to such an extent and not those of the other race groups to a similar extent to create this crime reality. The **only** relevant reality was commencing in the second half of the 1960's the strategy to create along the East-West Corridor of Trinidad a

wholesale/retail illicit drug market not owned and controlled by Africans that targeted urban Africans as their major consumers in T&T (2). This market has blossomed and evolved with the failure of the politicians and the state agencies to restrict its development and in its wake it has created its own order of the Life as an alternate worldview, economy and lifestyle to that of the licit life. The targeted consumer race has now evolved into the race from which the majority of victims and perpetrators are drawn but do they control the economy of the Life today?

Humans in T&T are now forced to live in contested spaces where the Life is engaged with licit life for hegemony and humans must learn to survive, to devise survival strategies, perceptions and ranges of human choice actions in these spaces. They must be able then to traverse and function in multiple worlds and that is a grave burden to bear and not all humans are able to master the skills necessary. They then surrender, they go left, they go mental, they seek to internally and externally migrate, they accept the cycle of incarceration as a way of life, they die. Survival can then demand living in shades of grey as you travel from one life to the next and back where licit and illicit blend into a continuum of shades of grey. These skilled shades of grey walkers present the most talented of this world created by contested spaces and the creation destined to challenge all structures they insist are fetters on their development and the birth of the new order of the haters. The skilled shades of grey walkers are assets of the illicit, licit and the worlds of grey and the purveyors of an alternate order. The power of the product of contested spaces is apparent in society as especially young males of the middle class utilise a parody of the Life to define their manhood where they are gangsta but never did time in remand or in the Grove. The contested spaces of the middle class locales and the gated communities is but another reality as is the spread of the model that targeted Africans to the Indian communities in order to deepen the retail market and finally the expansion of the Mixed group as a contributor of victims and perpetrators following in the footsteps of the African group. The Indian group will follow the path sooner than later of the African and Mixed race groups. In this profile of race and serious crime in T&T the minority races are the saints and angels on earth of the population which feeds the racist discourse of race minority victimisation and predatory Africans. Does this statistical depiction of reality flow with the reality on the ground?

The endemic violence is driven by the tsunami of illicit small arms that continues to flood T&T since the decade of the 1990s. The availability of affordable illicit guns has changed forever the nature of conflict and its resolution in the social order of T&T. The evolved conflict demands violent engagement regardless of outcomes and state sanctions as jail and prison denotes rank in the Life. The evolved conflict has a very low threshold for violence as tolerance and forgiveness in the course of human interaction denotes weakness and loss of rank. This evolved conflict has then heightened the demand for guns, shooters, assassins, victims and violence. The response of successive governments is to fill the prisons and constipate the judicial system but the illicit trades grow in value, scale and expanse and conflict evolves to even further levels of anarchic violence. This anarchic violence has now delegitimised the state and its agencies and the failure of the politicians to respond effectively and sustainably to the challenge has delegitimised the licit order. T&T is then showing all the characteristics of the Mexican model.

1. http://www.tt.undp.org/content/dam/trinidad_tobago/docs/DemocraticGovernance/Publications/TandT_Demographic_Report_2011.pdf
2. Daurius Figueira: "Cocaine and Heroin Trafficking in the Caribbean the case of Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Guyana"
<http://bookstore.iuniverse.com/Products/SKU-000025032/COCAINE-AND-HEROIN-TRAFFICKING-IN-THE-CARIBBEAN.aspx>