

Why the Growing Violence?

by Janet Jagan

Violence comes in all shapes and sizes and has been growing here and all over the world at a rapid pace. One has only to look at the crime rates in Trinidad, Jamaica, Guyana and then move on to the USA, Brazil, Mexico and the killings in Iraq in the name of fighting terrorism. One might say the world has gone berserk while more and more lethal weapons go into the wrong hands, including the hundreds of thousands of soldiers who should be handling computers and tractors instead of deadly weapons.

Our own history is rife with violence. While Guyanese were living through the horrors of the violence of the sixties, paid for and encouraged by the unholy alliance of the UK/USA, its minions were bombing, raping, shooting, killing and terrifying hundreds of Guyanese. And this led to the infamous 28 years of misrule and more violence - the killing of Rodney, Darke and others and the perpetuation of a dictatorial regime. But we've all heard and/or experienced this.

What we might not be aware of is that we were not alone. Read this: "The first and last democratically chosen leader of his country (Patrice) Lumumba became prime minister after the Congo won its independence in 1960. After a few months in office, he was deposed, imprisoned, beaten and killed by his political rivals, who were encouraged at every step by both the United States and Belgium. De Wittle's book provoked a Belgium Parliamentary enquiry and an official apology from the government. The United States, however, has never apologized, even though President Eisenhower gave his approval to the aim of assassinating Lumumba" (the New York Review, October 6, 2005, article entitled "In the Heart of Darkness" by Adam Hochschild.)

Does it sound familiar as we review our own grim history of the violent sixties? Luckily enough, Jagan wasn't assassinated, but according to the records it was pretty close to happening.

Violence spreads throughout the world, spurred on by many factors, such as the reference above. It surges forward by many ways - one of them being the development of technology. The movies and television brought new levels of mass communication and exposed more and more people to visual encounters with violence. Just a daily run-through of TV programmes will show that there is even more violence on TV than pornography and sex.

A child today starts seeing TV at a very early age and no matter how the parents may try, he/she sees harsh killings daily. After a while, a man with a gun shooting another man dead is nothing new - as common as drinking a glass of water.

If we can understand this, then we can start to comprehend how a person can lift a weapon and coldly kill another person. It is happening by the minute all over the world.

Moral values are dropping. In a little country like ours, children are being violated daily by their fathers, stepfathers, uncles, teachers, etc.

I was shocked to read in the Guyana Chronicle last week, side by side, two court items. The headline of one was: "Teacher accused of molesting pupil on station bail;" the other, "Accused horse thieves refused

bail, other defendant granted.” So, two men were remanded to prison for stealing two horses valued at \$60,000 and a teacher, who is alleged to have molested a nine-year-old pupil was placed on \$20,000 bail, later increased to \$75,000.

Talk about moral values degenerating! Just think about these two court items. There are two places a child should feel safe - in his/her home and at school. A teacher accused of molesting a child in his care is surely a more serious threat to society than the theft of two horses! Yet a stepfather can be sentenced to 10 years for raping a child in his custody while a car thief might get the same sentence. There’s something wrong out there, as are all the violence, executions, thieving, incest, domestic violence, kidnappings and all those aspects of crime, spreading, unfortunately.

In a rape case before the courts, two men are accused of raping a 15-year-old schoolgirl in 1997. The crime allegedly occurred nine years ago and the victim is now almost 24 years of age - maybe married, maybe having children. How must she feel going to the courts now? Can this be termed “justice”? Nonsense! Such gross delays are inexcusable and harmful to society.

While the police have greater tasks and more responsibility in solving and reducing crimes, civilian populations have more responsibilities in trying to curb crime. The home and the school are, perhaps, the most important areas of the formation of a child’s character. Children must and have to be guided by strong principles of right and wrong. Maybe greater attention to the child’s development could have some effect in the molding of better citizens and less violence and crime. And more attention must be given to curbing powerful governments from performing greater sins against humanity.

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