

VOLUME 1

ISSUES GUYANA

Come Hear Dis

IN THIS ISSUE: // If you don't report a rape your body will / Yes, I did grow up in a rape culture / The Demise of Ms. Harshum



Painting by Michael Griffith (Oxygen Art)

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ISSUES GUYANA: COME HEAR DIS!

Pauline E. Bullen, PhD - Editor

Once you strip away the lie that rape is pleasant, that children are not permanently damaged by sexual pain, that violence done to them is washed away by fear, silence and time, you are left with the positive horror of the lives of thousands of children... who have been sexually abused and who have never been permitted their own language to tell about it (Alice Walker, 1988, p.57).

“I grew up in a rape culture”. It was this bold statement about one person’s painful assessment of his reality at a meeting in Trinidad, that prompted the collaborations that produced, **ISSUES GUYANA**, where we say, “Come hear dis”, hear our stories, see the pain expressed in our art and understand how wounded our lives are as a result of sexual harassment, rape, incest and murder. The contributors to **ISSUES** all have stories that we wish we did not have to tell, but we know that the world won’t get any better if we just let things be! Complacency and silence will NOT keep any of us safe. So, this is more than simply “Storytelling”, it is a call to action – a call for an ousting of complacency and comfort, replacing it with the resolve and motivation to act - to do something.

This publication, was first born in Zimbabwe, Southern Africa. An educated man raped his sister’s daughter. The culture said that the niece was a ‘little wife’, not in sexual terms. That mother appealed to a small group of women, and I was one of them, to produce a magazine on rape, and “Issues – Pane Nyaya” (Issues: We have stories to tell) was born.

With **Issues Guyana**, we want people in the Caribbean and internationally, to read, hear and understand that much of the fear, anger and violence crosses continents and is present everywhere in our global village. We take the stance that culture is not static and therefore requires that we change, shift perspectives, rethink and redefine what we see and label as “tradition” and/or “acceptable”. Jamaican born Sociologist, Cultural Theorist and Political activist, Stuart Hall wrote extensively about culture as something that is NOT static but ever changing – fluid and dynamic. He wrote that culture is produced with each generation, that we reproduce our own identities and that instead of thinking of culture as “a return to roots” instead we should think of culture as “routes — R-O-U-T-E-S — the various routes by which people travel (Paul, A., 2005)”. Culture travels, culture moves, culture develops, culture changes, cultures migrates and as socialized human beings we are capable of critically thinking and charting new routes to greater understanding, equity and social justice.

We acknowledge that change is painful for those who would want to hold on to what is “familiar” or those who do not want to lose the monetary and psychological (power) rewards they receive as gatekeepers of particular “traditions”. However, a recent UN report tells us that the rate of sexual violence against women outside of relationships is the highest in the world and the second highest for those in a union. That is the driving force behind asking you to listen and “Hear Dis”.

As women listen to those who would reinforce sexist teachings, sisters, mothers, brothers, fathers, they hear that “it is a man’s world” and that a woman has to learn to cope with various forms of abuse because “that’s the way it is”. The way it is however, is that statistically, women and girls constitute 99% of victims of abuse particularly in the private sphere, that is, the home. This means that “home” is a place where a young woman cannot expect and trust that she will be nurtured and protected but where she can expect to be violated. Statistics tell us that many of these violations are global despite the fact that cultural beliefs and ‘norms’ may differ.

Young women report the fact that they are often told that the abusive male is “just being a man” and that it is necessary to “just keep him happy”, because perhaps, he, the abuser, is “under a lot of pressure”, that he, the abuser is no doubt “sorry” and that “things are sure to get better”. In many homes children are not only witnesses of abuse, but victims, and they learn fear as well as acceptance of it, as part of their everyday lives.

If there were some knowledge as a child 9, 10, years that fathers were not like that, were not sexual with their daughters... I was ignorant, and I didn’t know whether fathers were really like that or not. And if I’d gotten some information when I was younger, I think that would have helped (P. Bart & E. G. Moran eds. 1993 p.54).

Globally it is a shared fact that 1 in 3 women have been beaten, coerced into sex or abused in some other way – most often by someone they know and trust - a friend, a boyfriend, a father or father figure, a husband or partner. It is a global fact that 1 in 4 women are abused during pregnancy, and that 1 in 5 women can expect to be a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime. It is a fact, that the toll (cost and damage) of violence on women’s health exceeds that of traffic accidents and malaria combined. In fact, violence kills, disables or maims the same number of women between 15 and 44, as cancer does.

Violence against women is an expression of male dominance. It stems from the desire to dominate – to inflict pain. It is cruel and brutal. It also stems from feelings of inadequacy and vulnerability as pressures from models of manhood and masculinity held by previous generations are imposed by elders under the label of ‘tradition’. There is a seemingly unconscious disregard for the evidence that a number of outdated models of masculinity do not apply in the modern and changing world. It is a fact that ideologies of male superiority often legitimize ‘disciplining’ women for transgressions from conservative, prescribed gender roles and this is cause for deep concern. Thus there is cause for deep concern about the men in our society because it is evident that they are paying a heavy price for subscribing to a hegemonic or toxic form of masculinity which results in a remarkably high percentage of rape, murders and suicide.

Men cannot be expected to overcome their abusive tendencies or develop their nurturant capacities overnight and it makes no sense to expose children to the unsupervised care of men whose interest in them may be ambivalent at best and perverse at worse (P. Bart & E. G. Moran eds. 1993 p.53).

Speaking out about violence against women, about sexism, sexual abuse and oppression demonstrates 'agency', that is, an ability to take action in defense of the self. Individuals who have been threatened into silence and disempowered can with support, find their voices and take action to change their lives. Widespread efforts to build awareness of the social, cultural and economic factors that lead to sexual assault, exploitation and oppression is necessary to effect changes in thinking and actions. It is necessary that individuals speak out in many circles, in community forums, through mass media and from grade school to university.

There is a crisis situation in our communities in Guyana that continues to be ever present. It is a destructive presence. It is urgent, it is catastrophic, and it exposes the fact that many people are as brutal and repressive as the "male brute with obvious problems" that ironically, they and many others have been taught to fear. As a result, there has to be collaborative attempts to end the evils that this publication brings to life.

As we examine and probe real-life stories, happenings – 'goings-on', it is our intention to highlight the probable dangers that are lurking around us, not with the intention to scare, but to raise awareness and underline the need for action. Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, Rape, Incest, Human trafficking are issues that plague whole communities of people throughout Guyana and they must be addressed. We can choose to go about our daily routines pretending that they do not exist, yet someone will say, "Come hear dis" as a result of our small population, the overcrowded living conditions we share, and our penchant for posting every latest occurrence, no matter how mundane or horrific on Social Media.

Issues Guyana dares to challenge the status quo, to cause a shift of mindsets, and to agitate for a movement to end the sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression that negatively impacts the lives of all children and adults - a movement with a foundation of equality and justice for us to all stand on.

Certainly not an easy read, but a must read, this first issue of "***Issues Guyana***" is for everybody – old and young, regardless of class, religion, ethnicity or orientation. As you turn the pages, you will note that most of the stories have been written by men. This was deliberate because Gender Based Violence, Intimate partner violence, rape, incest are NOT just women's issues, they are issues that require a commitment for change from all our citizens - they are social justice and human rights issues and every one of us must have a say in ensuring a more responsive and caring society – one that is well oiled and gassed – one that evolves as a result of positive change.

So, hear dis, in this and future publications of "***Issues Guyana***" no subject of gender oppression will be viewed as too 'minor' to talk about. We gwan speak out!

The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action (Excerpt) by Audre Lorde (an African Caribbean American Feminist Scholar/Activist)

I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood - that the speaking profits me, beyond any other effect.

I was forced to look upon myself, and my living, with a harsh and urgent clarity that has left me still shaken, but much stronger. Some of what I experienced during that time has helped elucidate for me much of what I feel concerning the transformation of silence into language and action.

In becoming forcibly and essentially aware of my mortality, and of what I wished and wanted for my life, however short it might be, priorities and omissions became strongly etched in a merciless light, and what I most regretted were my silences. Of what had I ever been afraid? To question, or to speak, as I believed could have meant pain, or death. But we all hurt in so many different ways, all the time, and pain will either change or end. Death, on the other hand, is the final silence. And that might be coming quickly now, without regard for whether I had ever spoken what needed to be said, or had only betrayed myself into small silences, while I planned someday to speak, or waited for someone else's words.

I was going to die, if not sooner than later, whether or not I had ever spoken myself. My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you. What are the words you do not yet have? What do you need to say? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence? Perhaps for some of you here today, I am the face of one of your fears. Because I am a woman, because I am Black... because I am myself — a Black woman warrior poet doing my work — come to ask you, are you doing yours?

And of course I am afraid, because the transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation, and that always seems fraught with danger. But my daughter, when I told her of our topic and my difficulty with it, said, "Tell them about how you're never really a whole person if you remain silent, because there's always that one little piece inside you that wants to be spoken out, and if you keep ignoring it, it gets madder and madder and hotter and hotter, and if you don't speak it out one day it will just up and punch you in the mouth from the inside."

In the cause of silence, each of us draws the face of her own fear — fear of contempt, of censure, of some judgment, or recognition, of challenge, of annihilation. But most of all, I think, we fear the visibility without which we cannot truly live.

And that visibility which makes us most vulnerable is that which also is the source of our greatest strength. Because the machine will try to grind you into dust anyway, whether or not we speak. We can sit in our corners mute forever while our sisters and ourselves are wasted, while our children are distorted and destroyed, while our earth is poisoned; we can sit in our

safe corners mute as bottles, and we will still be no less afraid.

Each of us is here now because in one way or another we share a commitment to language and to the power of language, and to the reclaiming of that language which has been made to work against us. In the transformation of silence into language and action, it is vitally necessary for each one of us to establish or examine her function in that transformation and to recognize her role as vital within that transformation.

For those of us who write, it is necessary to scrutinize not only the truth of what we speak but the truth of that language by which we speak it. For others, it is to share and spread also those words that are meaningful to us. But primarily for us all, it is necessary to teach by living and speaking those truths, which we believe and know beyond understanding. Because in this way alone can we survive, by taking part in a process of life that is creative and continuing, that is growth.

And it is never without fear — of visibility, of the harsh light of scrutiny and perhaps judgment, of pain, of death. But we have lived through all of those already, in silence, except death. And I remind myself all the time now that if I were to have been born mute, or had maintained an oath of silence my whole life long for safety, I would still have suffered, and I would still die. It is very good for establishing perspective.

We can learn to work and speak when we are afraid in the same way we have learned to work and speak when we are tired. For we have been socialized to respect fear more than our own needs for language and definition, and while we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us.

The fact that we are here and that I speak these words is an attempt to break that silence and bridge some of those differences between us, for it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken.

(First published in Sinister Wisdom 6 (1978) and The Cancer Journals (Spinsters, Ink, San Francisco, 1980)

GUYANESE MEN SPEAKING OUT AGAINST DOMESTIC/INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

By Alim Hosein

Is terrible fuh hear about all dem woman who gettin kill by dem husban or bai-fren, an all de rape wha goin aan. It look like evri week dem gat some murda or rape, even includin lil chirren, in Guyana. Sometimes yuh get two, tree murda or rape in waan day or two day. An dese tings happenin all ova Guyana – in town, in de countryside, pon de Eas Coas, Wes Coas, in Linden, Essequibo, all ova de place. It really mek yuh wanda wat goin on, if de men jus get crazy or if dem feel dat dem cyan jus do wat dem want.

If yuh check, yuh gon see dat wife murda is waan a de highes murda rate in Guyana. Is nah jus bandit ah kill people, but is a man who livin wid a woman, he geh chirren wid she, den someting happen an nex ting yuh know, he stab she up. Wen bandit ah kill people it mo easy fuh deal wid because de police know who ah de bandit an dem know weh fuh find dem. De police can do patrol in Gyargetong an in de villages. Of course, de bandit dem does get away an hide; dem does go to Suriname an so aan. But at leas de police know is who dem lookin fuh. But wen is uncle rapin niece or husband killin wife or bai-fren killin gyal-fren is who de police gon patrol?

Dis is a big prablem an it na easy fuh deal wid because we culture accustom fuh treat woman like “de lower class” in comparison to men. We accustom to de man bein de bass. We accustom to allowin men fuh have more dan waan woman. We accustom to “chile fada” an “chile mudda”. We accustom to “village ram”. Also, we get use to de idea dat a woman gat fuh “bear up” wid a man wen he gat nuff woman or wen he nah ah treat she good. All dis is part ah we language: “chile fada”, chile mudda”, “village ram”, “sweet bai”, “bear up”, bear yuh chafe”, “mek do wid wha yuh gat”, “live home”, “outside woman”, “deputy”, “sweet woman” an so aan. Wen wife beatin and abusin happen, we seh dat “de two a dem gat lil prablem” an we pass it aff like da because we accustom to dat kinda livin.

Dis kinda language an culture mek Guyanese man dem believe dat dey gat a right ova de woman. Dat dey own she an gat fuh control she. Dey believe dat de woman always gat fuh be available to dem wen dey want, an if she seh “no” den dey gat fuh get she by force. Dis culture also mek dem grow up widdout undastandin about woman, an how fuh live wid woman. So, wen dey come fuh deal wid real-life woman is like dey insecure an cyant deal wid a adult woman who gat she own mind an she own idea.

Is true also dat men gat issues dat we doan focus aan in Guyana. We expek men fuh act in a certain way and do certain tings. Wen dey doan do dat, we call dem “antiman” and we doan gi dem de same respek we gi adda men who gat nuff woman and who does drink and smoke an suh.



Painting by Michael Griffith (Oxygen Arts)

Now, if we agree dat de police cyant patrol people bedroom and house, how we gon solve dis prablem? De police gat fuh be train betta fuh deal wid wife abuse an rape, but is nat the police work alone. De prablem gat fuh stop before it reach de level weh police gat fuh come in. We gat fuh re-educate we bai chirren. We gat fuh re-educate we gyurl chirren. We gat fuh change we family culture. Is a whole culture we gat fuh change.

Some people seh dat paverty is part ah de prablem. But dat is nat de whole story. Rape, wife abuse an murda happenin at all level ah we society. An paverty is no excuse fuh any kinda violence. Odda people seh dat is because ah we colonial histry dat we accustom to violence. Dat might be so, but we pass through dat more dan fifty year now. We drivin cyar an travellin abroad an buildin tree-storey house wid flat-screen tv an intanet and all dem ting. But we ent focusin aan modernisin we mind an we tinkin.

All ah we gat fuh be very worried about dis prablem. Dis cyant be a narmal situation.

A culture of violence, or a product of society?

By Lenox Shuman

From since I could remember, my father was the Chief of our small community of St Cuthbert's. It seemed like the title would never leave him, nor did the responsibilities of being Chief.

Having grown up in an indigenous community, I felt as though we were shielded from the ills of the world. I do recall when visitors would come in to our community we would make fun of their food as we enjoyed our kali (cassava bread). And so we did with their drinks, their strange rolling vehicles, and their strange way of speaking. We enjoyed walking and paddling and fishing and seeing our families tightly knitted. My Dad, uncles and their friends were the first set of Indigenous men to be enlisted in the Army and became the first Indigenous Drivers in the Army.

But with the invasion of a new culture, mostly on the weekends, when most people wanted to see the novel "Amerindian" community in a day tour, came something with significantly more trouble.

Growing up in our community gave me an opportunity to see what community was meant to be. It never gave me the exposure to domestic violence at a young age. But as I said, along with visitors came a change.

Visitors would bring with them, their fine whiskey and refined spirits and offer it to our elders as something new to taste. They never bothered to mention that these strange new liquids were more refined and potent than "our local" and that the onset of intoxication was more rapid. It was a strange phenomenon, in retrospect, to see the gradual transformation of a community. We never knew what it was like to see home based violence nor rape but within the span of a few years, the transformation of a culture and community would take a tragic and dreadful turn.

Everyone of age knew that to go swimming while intoxicated, among other things, would upset the water spirit, and so the first life was lost. A young man visiting our community pay no heed to our elders' warning and dove overboard, never to take another breath.

This was the first lesson for our community with the new liquid.

The following month, my Dad and uncles returned from a fishing trip at Abary. It was a short two days walk from home. I do recall waking up at 12 in the morning to eat Parai before our next rise at 5 am to go swimming. Shortly before we were to rise, we heard a solid knock at the door. "Kafoteh... Kafoteh!" My Dad answered, "Yes Aunty" and he and the woman from our village who had arrived began to speak in Arawak, at which point I lost the conversation. My Dad got up and put on some water for lemongrass tea and they conversed some more. After a nice cup of tea and with the sun breaking the horizon, my Dad left the house with the woman.

When he came back, in our inquisitive nature, we asked what she was saying to him and what happened. It became evident, the effects of alcohol was taking hold. The woman's husband had been drinking all night and came home hungry. Having not remembered he had dinner before he left on his quest to conquer the bottle, he was not happy to find dinner not awaiting his return. My dad explained that the woman had said, "He is a good man and a bad man. When he drinks he is a monster and when he does not drink, he is a good man."

This was but one instance of where things were headed. After that initial conversation with my dad as Chief, the visits grew in magnitude and frequency from other community members. Husbands accused their wives of infidelity and Wives accused their husbands of infidelity, a label to which neither took too kindly to.

It was sad to see that people took to the bottle before they attempted to address their social and familial problems. I can say, having followed in my ancestral path and served as Chief in my community, it was most upsetting to see the role alcohol played in domestic violence.

I do recall having complained to the Police Divisional Commander before he was moved to head up Division A, of one police officer dreadfully abusing his wife in the Police outpost. There was no action on this information and the disappointment was unbearable.

When one woman attended the Police Outpost to file a report of domestic violence, she became the object of sexual harassment by the officers to the point where I ordered the police out of our community.

What is most upsetting is when the people who are charged with the responsibility to look out for these ills become party to them.

After these dreadful cases, domestic violence seldom made it to the Police outpost.



Figure 1: Battered Woman by Dre Jacobus

'Is why the man beat you this time?'

- Guyana struggles to reverse the epidemic of violence against women

By Neil Marks (reprinted and edited with permission)

News Room Guyana: March 12, 2018

When she was just 12, my mother was already entangled in a strange world of emotional pain and uncertainty. Her mother died suddenly, and when her father left on a business trip, her grandfather assumed guardianship and soon arranged her marriage with the son of one of his friends. Her marriage to that man, my father, a year after Guyana gained independence from Britain in 1966, turned out to be far from freedom of the bounds of poverty and heartache. A drunk most of the time, he would beat her “whenever he felt like,” she told me last month.

It was our first conversation ever, about the kind of man he was –33 years after he drowned in the waters of the Atlantic coast while on a fishing trip and she was unable to hold the tears; the scars from those beatings were still fresh decades later. Left with nine children, she girded up her loins, fighting one wretched circumstance after another, to make ends meet, but there was only so much she could do.

Four years after my father’s death, I ended up living with my eldest sister, her husband and their six children that came along and for seven years, I saw my sister being beaten mercilessly by her husband; sometimes as his mother watched – in approval. The children would all scamper to my room, screaming, as their father beat their mother, as I begged for the moment

to end. The one night, I decided to intervene was the one night she ever called out – to me – for help. I rushed into the room.

“Oh, I have to deal with two of you now?”

I was smart enough to know that was a threat and not an idle question of surrender. I grabbed some of the children and my sister held on to the others as we crashed down the stairs as he approached with a machete. We ran into the midnight darkness to find shade under a tree in the cow pasture. After some time, when we calculated he would fall asleep, we returned “home” – to wait for another weekend of torture – just the same way my mother always returned after the times she was bold enough to run away to a relative’s house when the beatings were unbearable.

Where I lived, violence against women was the norm. It seemed part of the consequences of living; there was nothing shocking about it. Sometimes the neighbours intervened, other times they didn’t bother to.

I wondered why they didn’t; I had often silently prayed that someone would come to rescue us.

ENDEMIC

My personal experience is by no means an anomaly. Last year, the Guyana Police Force received 2, 140 reports of domestic violence from its eight police divisions, an increase of 14.2 percent in the number of reports made. To gain the protection of the police, the women must visit the station personally or make a call.

“But how many women know the numbers of their police stations?” asked Akila Doris, manager of the government’s Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Policy Unit.

For those who do know the numbers, the reputation of unprofessional conduct deters them from reporting the abuse.

“The systems are not perfect and the systems can be frustrating,” Doris admits.

“...many of our sisters are living in a conflict situation, having access to neither peace nor security, much less stability,” the First Lady stated, added, “they do not have faith in a system in which reports of domestic violence are treated as bothersome if not dismissed”.

Indranie Chandarpal, the chairperson of the Women and Gender Equality Commission, a constitutional body set up to promote the development of women’s rights, suggests that rural and hinterland women are mostly unaware of how they can get help. At Parika, some 40 kilometers from the capital Georgetown, I decided to analyse the situation for myself. After a short wait, a woman approached the station. She had not even reached the gate when an officer shouted: “Oh God, this one coming again!”

In what seemed like a chorus, the other officers burst out laughing.

“You too steady with this thing,” the officer told her when she got into the station. “Is why the man beat you this time?”

She denied his assertion that she was drinking again; he did not take her report. She left—more frustrated than when she came.

“We need to make our women more aware of how they can seek help and we need the police to understand how to deal with them when they do get to the station,” Chandarpal lamented.

“Procedures are laid out on how our police should handle these cases, but one bad example of an officer not being responsible throws away all of the good work we are doing,” David Ramnarine, Guyana’s acting Police Commissioner later explained. Chandarpal said that while the reports are dominated by abuse against Indo-Guyanese, abuse of varying forms cut across racial divide and has not eased with time.

The day my mother was married, the Guyana Graphic newspaper carried a story about a city watch technician Louis Pontes, who was found guilty of assaulting his former wife Clothilde. During an argument about having their sick child see a doctor for mumps, he shoved her violently out onto the landing, but she grabbed hold of the handle to save herself from falling.

Tomorrow, 21-year-old Kyle Goddett will appear in court for the first time after he was placed on bail for attempted murder of his ex-girlfriend, Susana Culpepper. Early last month, as Susanna lay in bed with her new boyfriend, Godett doused her with gasoline and lit her afire through an open window. She remains hospitalised.

“All groups of women are victims of violence in one form or the other; people have accepted violence as a way of life; they see it as normal in relationships,” said Chandarpal. Melinda Janki, a human rights attorney who presented research on the effectiveness of Guyana’s gender laws, agreed with that position.

“Guyana’s legal system originated with European colonists, mostly Dutch and British who regarded women as inferior... In the 21st century, the Dutch and British have moved a long way from that, Guyana has not. The deep structure of our law remains colonial and patriarchal and if you understand that, you will be more aware of how laws can oppress women while appearing to liberate,” she explained.

HELP

Guyana's Domestic Violence Act was passed in December, 1996. One of its provisions is for a Protection Order, where the abuser can be told to stay away, and other orders under the law would mandate him to still provide for the victim and children, if there are any.

A woman who decides to leave the relationship, like my sister did after years of abuse, may be afforded Public Assistance of \$8, 000 (US\$40) but there are rules. For example, if she has children, she would have to prove they are attending school.

In some cases, a woman may be afforded an apartment and basic provisions for a period. Again, a Means Test is necessary. There is also a Difficult Circumstances Fund, from which a loan of up to \$250, 000 (US\$1, 250) can be accessed to start a business.

On the short-term, women in Guyana are accommodated in shelters run by Non-Governmental Organisations. Just one such shelter exists in the country's most populated region; but two newly built State shelters will come into operation.

The Domestic Violence Unit and the Police Force will soon be developing huge posters which will be placed in every police station to ensure the Police understand their responsibilities and to ensure women also know how they should be treated.

"Women must feel confident that they will get justice when they make a report," the Police Commissioner said.

For me, it will take much more than that to save more generations of our mothers and sisters from being abused, in some cases, to the point of death.

Violence in society and what I have witnessed and learnt

By: Peter Persaud

Growing up into manhood I was and currently am not attracted to violence. I grew up in a strict Catholic environment in the Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Amerindian communities in the Moruca sub-region of Region 1 (Barima-Waini). I was exposed to religious education in the primary schools I attended and the strict teachings of my grandparents which today I cherish. But as the saying goes, 'boys will be boys' and any complaint that reached my grandparents resulted in the sound scolding and whipping with a coffee whip I would receive. So as a little boy growing up I had to know where my place was, thanks to grandma.

Growing older and at age 15 years I migrated temporarily to Georgetown, the capital city, along with my mother because my grandmother took ill and had to be close to a doctor and more so a hospital. My grandmother was a Head teacher of the Santa Cruz primary school which at the time was managed by the Roman Catholic Church. In Georgetown we lived in Albouystown, which in 1974 was not easy because I was now exposed to a violent community in ways that I was not accustomed to. Many of the boys in the area who were my age had violent behaviors which I was never attracted to because of my strict upbringing. They would use indecent language, were quick to get into fights and disrespected girls and women as they passed by when they played cricket "pun trench dam" now known as Independence Boulevard.

The "boys" would play cricket every afternoon starting from 4pm and one afternoon I decided to join them because I loved cricket. I was welcomed and they addressed me as "You Buck boy" which had no effect on me. One afternoon whilst playing cricket a fight was about to erupt when I intervened by shouting "let's stop fighting and love each other and let us respect the girls and women when they pass because they are sisters and mothers". The boys were all shocked because they never expected this from me because I was easy and quiet. They then burst into laughter as I said "I am darn serious you hear me, now come on let's get on with the game brothers".

As the days went by with playing of cricket each afternoon, I observed a change in the "boys" behaviors and each one of them would invite me to their homes to see their parents. I humbly accepted these invitations where I met the parents of the "boys" and engaged in conversations pertaining to God Almighty, respect for people and the Hinterland where I came from. The "boys" were all multi-racial and they became like an extended family to me because their violent behaviors stopped. I did not give myself any praise for this but to the teachings of my grandparents which up to today I cherish.

Violence today in our society in my humble opinion is simply as a result of the rejection of the teachings of our parents and grandparents since charity begins at home.

'If you don't report a rape... your body will!'

By Dr Annamore Jamu, Harare, Zimbabwe (reprinted with permission)

As I trudged along, navigating my way out of the busy Casualty Department, a male nurse pleaded with me to see just one more patient. It was midnight of one particular Saturday and he literally dragged me to a far corner and to one girl who had travelled from another province in the company of her mother and a policewoman. They had come to get a medical affidavit for a rape that had taken place six years before.

Molly (not her real name) was raped by her uncle when she was ten years old and her uncle had threatened Molly never to mention anything about that fateful night or else he would kill her by strangulation. She had grown up to hate the extreme violation of her body. Two months prior to reporting the rape, Molly's mother had finally noticed the transition of her now 16-year-old daughter into a woman and the fact that she had never had her monthly periods. Her mother had sat her down until she confessed that uncle had raped her six years ago and so, for the past two months, Molly had been through countless interviews to explain her apparent lack of monthly periods. Mother over-emphasized that she should never mention that her uncle, (mother's brother) had raped her. In fact it was a stance, in such cases, that was the 'norm' in the whole community. So for Molly it was a roller coaster of mixed emotions. The family chose to believe that Molly's stunted growth was a combination of Molly's poor appetite and scarcity of food in that peasant set up. So everything and everyone around Molly managed to suppress the very fact that was eating her inside. Molly decided to shut her whole world up.

When a person is raped, there are a lot of processes and changes that take place that are biological, psychological and emotional. As I examined Molly I found that fear and anger, as a result of the rape by her family member (her uncle) were among the root causes of her medical condition.

The community and family beliefs about rape, the protecting of perpetrators and the silencing of rape victims had forced Molly to suppress her feelings. As a result she felt very much afraid each time her uncle passed in front of her. She was always afraid that she might be left alone with him and as a result, she relived that fateful night many times over. Fear dominated her life – her being. For example, as she saw the male nurse approaching, she literally curled up, almost into a fetal position. I witnessed her elbow digging deeper into her abdomen as if she was protecting her female organ that had been scarred and violated six years ago – at age 10 before her body was even fully developed. Molly was afraid of every male that tried to speak to her, the mother had explained and I noticed that even her eyeballs protruded as if to ensure that she would not miss the perpetrator – any potential perpetrator. Fear had changed her posture and had left her permanent hunched over – never able to sit up straight. Her feeble knees had curled up to her chin and so her spine had assumed a C shape and her head often jerked each time she changed her visual focus.

Fear literally shook her and she made a screeching sound as the male nurse was introducing her to me and her mother explained that she had recently started doing that every time a male

came near her. When I asked Molly why she made that sound, she didn't answer. I asked her for her name and still she didn't answer me. This is when I decided to admit her so that I could take my time in getting her to talk. I admitted her in the children's ward so that her mother could remain with her during the duration of her stay. I had already realized that fear had ravaged her childhood.

The following three days that I interviewed Molly to try and assess her medical condition, as had been requested by the courts, remain in my career, as some of the saddest and the most painful. Terror and distress had retarded her growth. She had somatized these emotions. Each time I asked her to explain how she was feeling she would tell me that her stomach was hurting.

Somatization is when psychological or emotional distress is expressed as a physical symptom. In the beginning her hurting stomach had no physical cause but was just a way of hiding what she felt however I realized the possibility that at the time of the medical examination, six years later, Molly could have actually developed an ulcer. When she repeatedly lied that her stomach was sore, no one expected her to eat and that anguish further ate her away.

Molly's body could not develop into a woman. For a girl to start her monthly period at puberty, she needs to have accumulated enough body fats and deposited them into appropriate areas such as the waist, the hips and the breasts. Without these essential fats, female hormones cannot kick in. Molly was then 16 years and she hadn't started menstruating! She weighed a mere 38 kilograms.

"Each time I see my uncle or any man for that matter, I feel they are out to rape me again" she explained with a tear finding its way to the corner of her mouth on day two of me talking to her. "I don't want that to ever happen to me again" she tried to gather some residual strength.

At that point as she tried to narrate the ordeal, I could literally hear her heartbeat without using a stethoscope. Drops of sweat broke onto her forehead and the veins on the side of her head were throbbing. There was no need to feel her pulse on her right wrist, I could see it pounding - it was fast. Her lips often got stuck onto each other because her mouth ran dry from remembering what happened on that fateful night. Fear had ruined her cardiovascular system and her blood pressure recorded 170/118, which was very high for such a tiny 16-year old girl.

As a medical practitioner, I know that if only Molly had spoken out as soon as she was raped she could have started on the recovery path much earlier. Her fears might have been dealt with and she may have had a good chance of developing in a relatively "normal" manner with monthly periods as soon as she reached puberty. Molly had been a beautiful child and she could have been Miss Zimbabwe on that modeling ramp if only she had been given the chance. However, at 16 years of age, her skin was dotted with rashes (partly from a low immune system and from fear) and she often dug her nails into the skin, mutilating her body, in an attempt to get some comfort and distraction from her anxiety and fear, whenever I asked her to explain

something. The constant fear that gripped her for the years was perceived by her body as chronic stress and such stress suppresses one's immune system.

After some time being afraid, one becomes angry and along with her fears Molly harbored anger towards her uncle who had raped her and the family and community that protected him and as a result betrayed her. She got angry that she could not open up to anyone about it, because if she opened up she would not be believed or even if believed she would be silenced. She told me that she would like to see her uncle thrown into a dark prison with no windows for the rest of his life. This is how angry she was and her suppressed anger ate away at her.

Anger, if not managed, turns into bitterness. Bitterness eats up people. It dries up your bones, very slowly, but surely. Every bone Molly had was sore and walking was a struggle for Molly because every joint refused to perform its duties. Many adult victims of rape and abuse are diagnosed with arthritis and do not respond to medication. If these adults are thoroughly counseled and find a place to forgive the person, their arthritis improves and in some cases disappears.

Bitterness is a self-destructive power. Some people have said "bitterness is like acid, it eats where it is sitting." There is a very strong mind – body connection and bitterness can cause a medical condition referred to by psychiatrists as, Post Traumatic Embitterment Disorder (PTED). Molly had experienced the kinds of trauma that had wreaked havoc in her life.

Different people handle rape in different ways. As we have seen in Molly's case, keeping quiet damaged her body probably more than if she had voiced it out. As I continued to interview and examine her in the weeks that followed, it was clear that her keeping quiet was a major contributor to her ill health. I never blamed it on her and that helped her to develop her voice. Her family had not allowed her to speak and she had learned that her community was not willing to accept the accountability that would come with her speaking out. Yet one of the strongest weapons, at our disposal to fight rape crimes, is to speak out as soon as it is done and have the perpetrator brought to justice. However, the rapist uncle had threatened to strangle and kill the 10-year-old Molly, if she spoke out. Unfortunately when our mouths don't speak out about rape, our bodies do and often, when the truth is learned and the source of the damage recognized it the destruction is already devastating.

The consequences of internalized fear, anger and bitterness is what I witnessed in Molly. Before writing this article, I thought I would check on Molly to see how she was doing since our interaction in 2010. I was informed by a weepy voice at the end of the line that Molly had committed suicide three years ago. If only she could have spoken out as soon as the rape had occurred, maybe... only maybe....



Painting by Michael Griffith (Oxygen Arts)

*Sometimes
when I wake up
in the morning
and see all the faces
I just can't
Breathe*

– Nikki Giovanni

"And he does beat woman... I thought you knew..."

By Vidyaratha Kissoon

Sunday morning chat. Young man - a brilliant writer, and me talking about this, that and one of Guyana's prominent citizens. "He does beat woman," the young man types in the chat window. He had heard this from the brother of a woman who the popular man had hit. The woman and her brother decided not to report to anyone.

There are plenty stories coming out of the USA of powerful and popular men who have abused women and other men. In Guyana, things appear more complex. There is a lot of mourning and anger when men kill women or beat them up, especially when the stories get into the media. Some of the men who are abusive but who do not leave marks or who do not kill, also join the condemnation of the murders.

Often the storytelling about abusive incidents demands promises to be confidential. Yet the first rule of counselling or hearing any story is to ensure that the survivor of violence is safe and no further harm is done. The more powerful and popular the man who beats and abuses women, the more difficult it is to prove and to believe the survivors. In the community, one man who has contempt for so-called "Coolie" women frequently uses public fora to demonstrate that contempt in ways which are subtle. Subtle, like so many other forms of abuse. He has been freed of one charge of sexual abuse and harassment and that 'freeing' appears to have given him the permission to continue to show contempt.

The young man told me "I'd call him out but other people will get dragged in".

I am feeling foolish as even though I disagree with the powerful and popular man on many things, I did not think he would be abusive. My instinct was not to believe, even though I should know better. I remember the one man in Guysuco who had told me that he supported my advocacy against domestic violence. He was subsequently charged after he attacked his wife and children, and tried to kill them outside of the house.

The young man said other women who were in relationships with the man talked about the abuse but had no evidence to charge the abuser or were trapped in the web of abuse. Entrapment is complex. The web of abuse includes behaviours which torturers have used on prisoners, and which Governments use on citizens sometimes to break their spirits.

With so many cases of abuse, it will always be a 'he seh, she seh.' story.

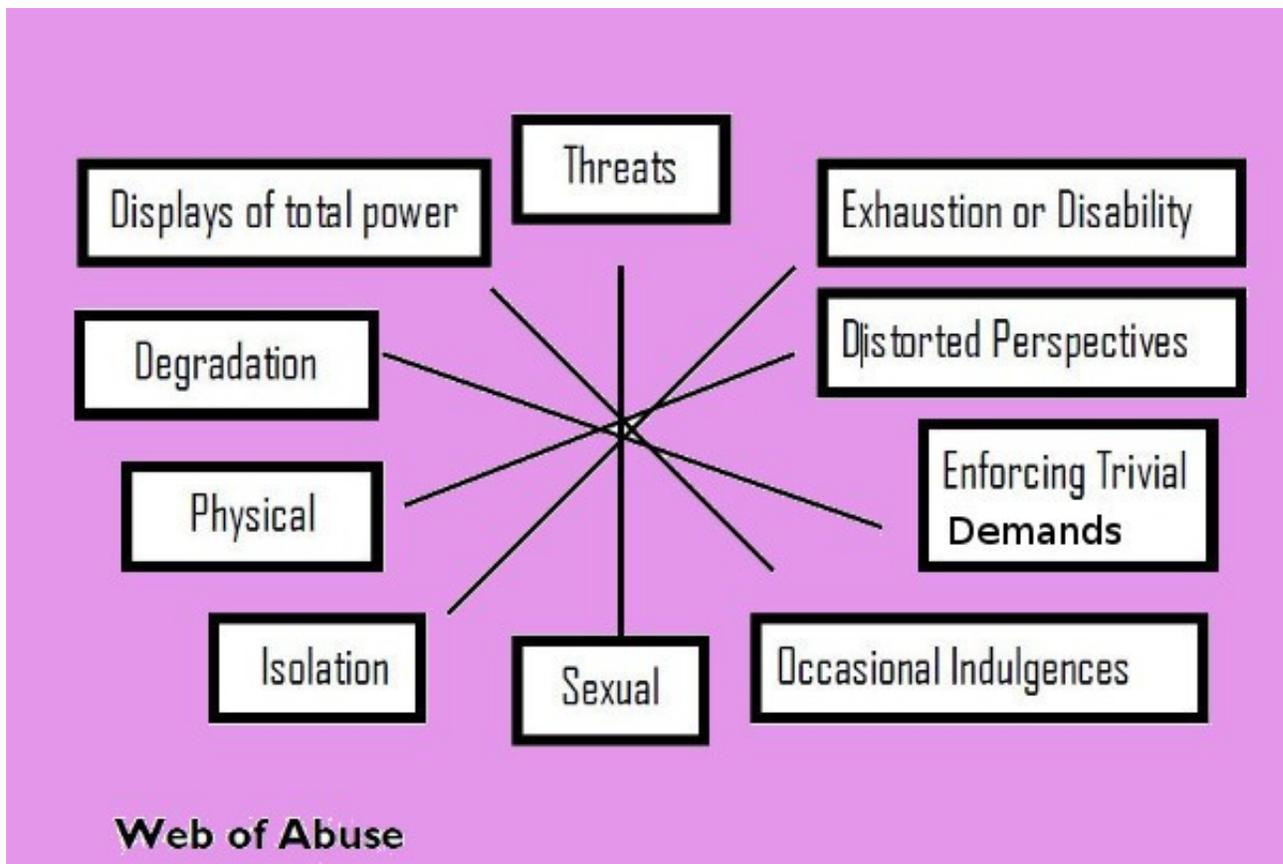
I unfriended the powerful man on Facebook. I was asked about his role in a particular activity, and I had to shut up and mumble. I could avoid him if I have to. I cannot confront him though, because the confidentiality rules apply and there could be harm to any of his current partners who he might have trapped, Yet, It is not enough to avoid abusive or see it as futile to change the culture which punishes women who try to break their silence because change is necessary. It should not be the responsibility of any woman alone to hold an abusive man accountable for

his behaviour. Safety is often the most pressing need and punishment of the abuser should guarantee safety.

This particular man has apparently offered redemption to at least one of the women who has survived his violence. He might have offered redemption to others so hence the silence.

A woman told me I was abusive and sexist in my behaviour towards her. We were talking on the phone. I was not conscious of wanting to harm her at the time. A man I thought I was close to told me that he was stunned by my anger in response to something he did. We were talking on the phone. He then told me that he was afraid of me and did not want to face me or my anger. I was not aware that I was angry at the time. I did not intend to cause him harm. He reached out to me to meet in a public place after almost two years. The meeting ended badly. He still seems cautious and fearful about communicating with me. I try to be conscious in my behaviour to ensure I am not abusive to anyone and to be open to feedback about my behaviour at all times.

The web of abuse explains how abusive relationships work, in intimate partner violence.



Isolation: not being let out of the house, prevented from seeing family & friends, having money taken away from you, prevented from seeking help.

Disability/Exhaustion: being physically disabled either permanently or temporarily, not being allowed to sleep, protecting children from abuser, treading on eggshells trying to figure out the abuser's feelings and desires.

Degradation: being made to do degrading sexual/domestic acts, forced to beg, having request refused, being made to have sex with other people, being called names and criticized, forced to change religion.

Threats: to hurt or kill children/pets/family/friends, to leave you penniless/homeless, to have children taken away, to take possessions away, emotional blackmail.

Physical: hitting, punching, slapping, kicking, damaging items, attacking pets, attacking vulnerable relatives.

Displays of Total Power: controlling finances, exploiting behaviours socially endorsed by culture, law etc.

Enforcing Trivial Demands: makes you perform tasks in a particular way, demands you wear particular clothes, that you wear makeup, speak in a particular way, or account for every minute, every action.

Distorted Perspectives: saying one thing and meaning and doing something else, acting ignorant of something he knows, expressing a lie as if it were a known truth, twisting your words, blaming your partner for your behaviour.

Occasional Indulgences: states good intentions, promises to change/get help/never do it again; buys gifts, gives you money, takes you out. While these may be genuine expressions in healthy relationships, in an abusive relationship this may be the attitude of the abuser after he has been abusive or violent.

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- i. This was originally published at <http://churchroadman.blogspot.com/2017/11/he-does-beat-woman-i-thought-you-knew.html>
 - ii. <http://gtmosquito.com/the-coil/domestic-violence-and-entrapment/>
 - iii. Brochures available at <http://www.hands.org.gy/brochures2011>

THIS IS US:

The following 2016 and 2017 Police Division reports give us much to reflect on regarding the prevalence of violence against women and girls in Guyana.

Division	Reports		Persons Charged		Persons Warned		Pending #s		Probation #s	
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
A	383	306	186	167	1	1	157	127	39	31
B	422	482	291	261	1	-	123	119	7	7
C	545	457	279	206	2	2	314	247	-	5
D	304	298	192	135	2	4	108	137	2	19
E	117	75	67	54	-	-	50	21	-	-
F	17	60	9	33	-	1	8	25	-	1
G	384	109	80	128	7	2	217	72	-	7
Total	2092	1812	1054	984	13	10	277	248	48	70

And Newspaper reports are often gruesome. For example, on Jan. 8, 2018, Kaiteur News reported that a woman was murdered every month in 2017 here in Guyana. The news report stated that:

- ❖ A 73-year-old woman is set alight by her own son. A teenage girl is battered to death with a rock in a cemetery.
- ❖ A farmer's wife is strangled and buried near a row of freshly-planted crops.
- ❖ A drug-addicted intruder buried an 18-month-old girl alive after ripping out her earrings and throwing her through a window.
- ❖ Police dug up the decomposed body of 39-year-old Lilwantie Balack, from the backyard of the Lot 117 Mibicuri North, Black Bush Polder home where she had lived with her husband.

On June 4, 2018 Kaiteur News reported that 10 Guyanese women had been murdered over a 5 month period.

Gender based power relations within society put many girls at a much higher risk than boys for some forms of violence, and sexual violence in particular. In fact, the issues associated with intimate partner and sexual violence occur at individual, family, community and wider society levels. Some are associated with being a perpetrator of violence, some are associated with experiencing violence and some are associated with both. The violence may be in the form of:

a) **Physical Abuse:** Assaults and threats used to control another person that includes punching, hitting, choking, biting, throwing objects or liquids at a person, kicking,

pushing and using a weapon such as a gun or a knife. Physical abuse usually escalates over time and may end in a person's death.

b) **Emotional and Verbal Abuse:** Attempts to undermine a person's sense of worth and may include constant criticism, belittling of abilities and competencies, name-calling, insults, put-downs, silent treatment, manipulation of feelings and emotions to induce guilt, subverting a partner's relationship with others (children, friends, siblings etc.), repeatedly making and breaking promises.

c) **Sexual Abuse:** Any sexual contact without consent and includes incest; demands for sex; the performance of unwanted sexual acts; forcing a person to have sex with others; insisting on unsafe sexual practices;

d) **Childhood Sexual Abuse:** Trauma caused by physical (e.g. sexual intercourse, rape) and non-physical acts (e.g. exposure to pornography and other inappropriate sexual material); encouraging children to behave in sexually explicit ways; a breach of trust in which an individual, who has the confidence of the child, uses that trust to secure sexual favours (UNICEF, Break the Silence Fact Sheet).

e) **Psychological Abuse:** Abuse designed to isolate and instill fear in individuals and often involves, for example, threats to harm, kidnapping, blackmailing, harassment, name calling (racial and otherwise), destruction of property pets etc.; 'mind games', unfounded accusations, constant surveillance, withholding supports and access to phone and transportation; undermining personal relationships.

f) **Economic Abuse:** Forced financial dependence by forbidding employment and maintaining control over personal and family financial resources with the aim of exerting power over one's partner; on the job harassment; demanding accountability and justification for all money spent; forbidding educational advancement.

g) **Spiritual Abuse:** Spiritual abuse is often linked to a church elder or faith leader inflicting abuse on congregation members (regardless of age or sex) but may also occur in a variety of other relationships. The abuse may occur in the form of using religious texts or beliefs to minimize or rationalize abusive behaviours (such as physical, financial, emotional, sexual abuse – including marital rape). It also involves manipulating, shaming, ridiculing, insulting or preventing another's practice.

HANDS OF VIOLENCE

By: Michael E. Scott (2017)

Hands that once cuddled,
Clenched and fondled
Hands now defy attraction
Denies the taste of love
So brutal, selfish
Slashing, lashing
Punching, raping.
Painful, repulsive hands.
I see it coming,
Contending, my desire for escape
Eludes me;
To feel evil hands
Grip and grab me
Oh! My hair
My throat
My deepness
I scream for dignity
Then my life goes gushing out of me.

I dared to stand my ground,

Resist the vicious crunch
Of deliberate ghoulish hands
Hands of sons
Hands of uncles
Hands of brothers
Hands of others too
All born of woman.
And those words of hate
Which trigger those hands,
From tongues
That hang me,
Handle me,
Humiliate,
Diminish and dwarf me
Devalue me
So worthless so useless I be

Yes its violence.
Remonstrative,
Confrontational,
Reflecting frustration
At seeing power ebb away
A power which is not
For hands that defile
Hands against which
All in unison must rile.

Hands so unloving
Fuelled by tongues of fire
Fanned by fury of silence
Kills me quickly
Kills me slowly
I surely died
Buried in no self esteem
Lie entombed in a cold friendly grave.
I speak from
Where no violence holds me
Oh my son
My brothers
My uncles
And others of my love.
Bind those hands of violence
For survival of your sisters
Your wives, your moms, your aunts
I once knew
And I never hope to know



Painting by Michael Griffith (Oxygen Arts)

Art allows me to say things that have to be said!

An interview with Visual Artist, Michael Griffith, by: P. E. Bullen, PhD

Tell us a little about how you came to be producing art works?

My earliest recollection was of watching a cousin who was visiting from Trinidad create cartoons. It was the most fascinating thing that I'd ever seen.

What now motivates your work?

Many of my pieces are introspective pieces that hold questions that I am grappling with at the time and am unable to verbalize or answer. Such as, 'Why men do certain things? Why we are bred to believe and behave in certain ways that are not always positive or productive? Why do some men go about in the world damaging women and children? I reflect on the fact that we often do what we learn and are often "Broken" or shackled. Some of our early teachings are like nooses or chains that imprison us.

I've always been aware of human rights and equity issues. I was conscious in a sense, but becoming aware of patriarchy and sexism and their effects, not just aware on an abstract level, was a transformational phase in my life. I believe Art is one of the most powerful platforms that may be used to bring about awareness. My work that depicts the hands of an adult and a child's twisted fingers is one that voices my rage and disgust about the daily news of child abuse. It's not a topic that people take lightly. My hope is that people will understand the message. It is not easy to bend the hands that far. I wanted people to see and feel the discomfort and pain – to feel uncomfortable.

As an artist do you ever have regrets as a result of people's reactions... that perhaps some aren't ready?

If I was concerned about another's readiness in terms of viewing my work then I wouldn't produce Art.

What is your hope for Art in Guyana?

I would like Art to be viewed as not a commodity for only the rich. Art has the potential to speak and to build bridges. I would like it to be seen as a good investment.

Name one place where you'd like to see your work?

I'd like to see a piece in every school.

(May 2018. Interview questions by Derwayne Wills)

A **2017 PAHO research report** has found that more children are being murdered along with their parent (often mothers). The findings on countrywide violence against children provides us with the following:

HOMICIDE INTENTIONAL VICTIMS - 2017

0 – 17 years	8 Victims	5 males	3 females
18 + years	107 Victims	89 males	18 females

Total Victims of Intentional Homicide: 115 with 22 cases involving firearms and 91 involving other weapons.

Risk factors for both intimate partner and sexual violence include:

- lower levels of education;
- perpetration of sexual violence and experience of sexual violence;
- a history of exposure to child maltreatment;
- witnessing family violence (perpetration and experience);
- antisocial personality disorder (perpetration);
- harmful use of alcohol (perpetration and experience);
- having multiple partners or suspected by their partners of infidelity (perpetration);
- attitudes that condone violence (perpetration);
- community norms that privilege or ascribe higher status to men and lower status to women;
- low levels of women’s access to paid employment
- Marital discord and dissatisfaction
- Difficulties in communicating between partners
- Male controlling behaviors towards their partners.
- Beliefs in family honor and sexual purity
- Ideologies of male sexual entitlement
- Weak legal sanctions for sexual violence.

Sustainable Development Goal #5

For Guyana, the route to change may lie in the countries commitment to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set as part of Resolution 70/1 by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. Goal #5 states that women and girls everywhere (and in Guyana this includes those in the Hinterlands) must have equal rights and opportunity, and be able to live free of violence and discrimination.

The Targets of Sustainable Development Goal #5 are to:

- a. End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
- b. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- c. Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- d. Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.
- e. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.
- f. Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.
- g. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.
- h. Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
- i. Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>

"I Am From..."¹

By Raymond Talovera

I am from a neighborhood where dummies from
Everyone dark like they been out too long in the sunny sun.
Never leave the block so I wonder where they get money from,
Scared to leave the store because they might steal my honey bun
Streets loud so I stay quiet, sure not to wake mommy up
The streets never sleep like the streets got insomnia
And I find it strange how everyday that
I walk down the block I see pussy..... relax, I'm talking about stray cats.

I am from the cheesiest of pizza
Every day a feast like it's Thanksgiving or Easter
Pizza or quesadilla boy I'm just getting started
I don't eat much with the family but I love anything Italian
Add a little scallions, heart burn
feel it on my chest like a necklace or medallion
Don't eat greens so I feel like I'm doing grass a favor
Know the food was good if it gave you gas later,

I am from a family that says you never know.
Say that to keep me from places I wanna' go.
To keep me safe. At home is where I better stay
How you telling me you never know and I learned it yesterday
Say you never know to keep me alive,
2+2 =4, YOU NEVER know tomorrow it might equal 5.
Say you never know with stupid explanations
Think I'm going to walk out and die like its final destination

I am from friends, to the end that know me from within
And know no matter what when I'm talking to them,
Like Even if your name was Frederick I'd call you Ben
Won't take a bullet for me, but I'm not askin'
Let them hold my wallet because I know they're never robbin' - like Baskins²
And it's all true, my friends keep me mellow
Even when I'm feeling blue, my friends make me yellow.

¹ The poem, "I am from" gives insight to one young Black man's feelings... We need more enrolled in programs where they receive opportunities to critically examine their ideas and develop their burgeoning political consciousness. It was written for a first year writing assignment that asked students to creatively introduce themselves by completing a poem with 4 stanzas, each beginning with the words "I am from", describing neighbourhood/place, family, food and friends.

² The reference, "like Baskins" in the final stanza of the poem refers to a chain of ice-cream parlours in the US called, "Baskins and Robbins".

"...Yes, I did grow up in a rape culture"

By Nkofi Hodge

At the young age of 12, I remembered clearly, on my way home, hearing one of the strangest stories I've ever heard.

Lady #1: Girl, I can't sit too fast, 'down there' hurting me.

Lady #2: Why? Is wah you do sah?

Lady #1: Girl, me and my husband had sex last night but I wasn't ready for it and now it bruise.

Lady #3: So wait, ya husband rape you?

Lady #1: What? My husband can't rape me.

My husband can't rape me!

Interesting. Growing up I would always have conversations about sex, sexual assault and rape with my family, but I never thought about a husband raping his wife. At 12 I knew what rape in the conventional sense was. I knew it meant having sex with somebody without consent, but at that point in time I began to reconsider the definition I knew because of how convincing the woman was as she said, "my husband can't rape me". Could it be that she was saying that he was physically incapable of raping her? Not strong enough? Not 'man' enough? Nevertheless, what I took home with me and believed for a very long time was that a husband couldn't rape his wife. I never stopped to question why, or even to understand this new definition of rape I had uploaded into my brain.

A famous murder-suicide once again reopened my mind to rape and marriage. My friends and I, like we often would do, critiqued social issues in Guyana and at the time that case was in the headlines. Once again, I was presented with conflicting views about rape and who is privileged enough to commit such an act. As we discussed the case, my friends all agreed that a sexual assault had taken place, but nobody even thought to label it rape. We all talked about the "licks" she received and condemned the abuse but none of us, ever thought about her being raped.

Maybe it's the Guyanese culture, maybe it is religion or maybe it's just a societal norm that tells men that they can benefit from marrying women, have sex and black and blue the women's faces.

Who knows?

But what I know, however, is that it took me more than a decade and a course in gender studies to truly understand what rape is. To conceptualize, not only the act of rape, but also the act of 'instituting' the rapist. The negative belief that "My husband can't rape me" has protected a lot of Guyanese men. That idea has become institutionalized and I can say that we men must share the responsibility for unconsciously or consciously being part of the problem.

There's light at the end of the tunnel. The day of the woman is arising. Men will have no other choice but to adapt to this incoming change. No longer will a woman in Guyana accept being given over as property to a man on her wedding day. No longer will women be stripped of their rights to choice, a voice or exercising their free will. Yes, I did grow up in a rape culture but I will leave in the era of women.

#metoo #timesup

Broken System

An excerpt... by Renata Burnette

We have 16 year old girls being gang raped, boys being caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. Children running away from their homes because the ones that are supposed to be protecting them, they're now molesting, physically and sexually abusing them forgetting that they too are children. They have no faith in us because we have failed them, tell me how do we help them if our system is broken?

THE DEMISE OF MS. HARSHUM

By Michael Khan

Memories don't leave like people do
They always stay with you
Whether they are good or bad

The essence of my story does not highlight the plight of the victims nor the cruelty of the abusers, but rather the lifelong plight of a third party; the children. Conventions of the day place great emphasis on creating safe environments for the victims of domestic abuse and at the same time allowing the abusers to feel the full force of the law. However a third and very important category that slips between the cracks are classified as collateral damage. These are the secondary victims of an abusive environment and include the children of victims and abusers, relatives, neighbourhoods and villages.

My story begins in the villages of Plantation Walk and Klien Pouderoyen situated on the west bank of the Demerara River and half a mile from the Vreed en Hoop ferry stelling. All of my childhood memories are locked into these two villages some good and others bad. My family's home was in Klien Pouderoyen where I lived with my father and four siblings while my mother lived in Plantation Walk in an apartment she rented from the Charron family. Next to the Charrons lived the Harshums a family of five with three small children, one around my age and the others much smaller. Mr. Harshum worked at the Versailles sugar estate as a parboiler. Ms. Harshum was a dutiful home maker of East Indian origin who would cook on a fireside daily and would visit the sea dam or crab bush to collect fire wood. However this weekly routine would come to an abrupt and cruel end since the murder of this mother would be the first in this nineteenth century and in the village that also took away the innocence of her children and those in the community. The murder created a different kind of "growing pain" in the lives of children – in my life, that I could never seem to fully overcome.

I cannot remember which day of the week it was but it was like any other working day with fathers at work, children at school and most mothers doing their home making chores. Even Mr. Ivan the fisherman sounded his conk shell inviting people to buy his catch of fish and shrimps. He was still there when I passed him to go to my mother's place for lunch at fifteen after noon. While eating lunch I could have heard the cries of the Harshum's toddler crying uncontrollably and someone saying "Don't cry baby, mummy coming just now." I attended the afternoon session at school then went home to Klien Pouderoyen. My father came home on the four forty ferry from Georgetown to Vreed en Hoop and he said, speaking directly to my siblings that Ms. Harshum was missing. He speculated that she might have run off with the estate overseer. It was rumored that she and a field overseer were having an affair. I hadn't a clue as to what they were talking about and later went to bed thinking of the sad quiet lady and her crying child.

The next day began like always with the rising sun and I making my way to school with the penny in pocket that my father gave me to buy a snack. I paid little attention when neighbours said, "they not find she yet and she husband gone to work." Others said "his wife gone with his

boss so he got to go to work.” Her big brother had not slept that night but spent hours checking to see where his sister had gone. Somehow he did not believe that a mother would just go away and leave her children. So he and a few of his close friends of the village organized a search of the crab bush starting from the Stelling side, ploughing through the mud knee deep and peeped into every mangrove bush. Lunch time at the Harshum’s house provided six men from the search party with a meal. A man in the gathering said, “We will start from the Koker and go Pouderoyen side and we will ask Ivan to borrow his boat because the water in the river is high.”

The routine of the afternoon was followed and I was heading home when I observed a crowd of people standing on the sea dam with lots more people assembling. There were no happy smiles on faces, only murmurs and sad appearances and the police. Villagers knew that wherever police was, there was trouble and when the inspector of police was in attendance, it was serious trouble. The crowd of mostly women kept saying, “They found her naked with all the fire wood pack on her.” The crowd had assembled on the sea dam opposite Shamrock Manor (which later became West Demerara Secondary School) and Guyana telephone and telegraph exchange.

I lingered in the area trying to understand what was really happening by listening to the talk of the crowd, but I was told to go home because this was ‘big people story’ and I was a little child. They forgot that I was a human being with feelings, confused and needed guidance to overcome my first real life nightmare. At home I looked to see when the estate employees were going home and if Mr. Harshum would pass in his khaki clothes and shining gold teeth. I did not see him but heard more villagers heading in the direction of the dam saying “they are bringing her out”. From where I lived I could not see the sea dam and when my father came home I was kept at bay and a certain fear engulfed me that I carried into my adult life.

This fear continued to grow the day of the funeral when from my mother’s window I could see the remains of Ms. Harshum wrapped in white cotton to cover the marks of violence on her body. Her brother stood over the coffin in tears as her children passed to see their mother for the last time. Half way into the funeral service a police land rover pulled up and four policemen exited with Mr. Harshum in handcuffs and leg irons. The mourners remained silent as the police allowed the husband to observe the remains of the wife he was arrested for murdering. He wore no expression as he looked, shook his head from side to side and glanced at his children and her relatives before the police escorted him out. People said he would hang for this as they took her for internment.

I never returned to the house my mother lived in or flew my kite in the nearby crab bush. I was always afraid to pass the telephone and telegraph exchange. I never spoke to anyone about the effect that this experience had on me. One morning when I was a teenager I saw Mr. Harshum riding his bicycle going to work dressed in a white shirt, black pants and a dark sunshade. In the afternoon he passed heading for the ferry stelling and I hardly slept that night because people were wrong, he wouldn’t “hang for it”. But me, I still remember the feelings of fear...

Growing Up in a Rape Culture and Why I Get Panic Attacks

By Derwayne Wills

“I rape dis morning. And I rape las’ night,” a youth about my age said to me without hesitation during a session in May 2018 on sexual negotiations, sexuality and rape culture in Georgetown. There was very little response, much less rebuke, from the other 34 of his work colleagues. This is what the normalization of sexual violence looks and feels like.

In 2018, a social media public education video published by a government ministry recreated a scene of street harassment and male aggression where a male animated minibus made unwanted advances against a female animated Mazda Axela. I’m still lost for words as to how this concept plays into increasing public knowledge of how to use the new roundabout road at Kitty, Georgetown.

In 2017, a prominent furniture company in Guyana ran a social media video advertisement for their eyewear department. The eyewear, according to the video, had the power to transform women from “easy” to “hard to get” as though women who are raped aren’t already thrown into patriarchy’s petri dish for public examination to see if they pass the “is her fault” test. In the public scrutiny of women’s sexual trauma, many bring themselves to ask sickening questions about why these victims were dressed the way they were, why they were walking at the places they walked, and whether they ‘wine’ back or not.

In 2016, while working on a community project, a community leader from one of Guyana’s more rural areas joked openly about encouraging his older male friends to invest in the community. He spoke about enticing them by luring them with the idea that there are ‘young girls’ who they could marry and eventually settle down in the community with.

These are the stories of a rape culture. It is a culture where sexual violence manifests from street and workplace harassment all the way to rape; where the stories of sexual abuse against children are hushed and covered; where differently-abled elderly women or even toddlers can be raped; and where after the traumatic ordeal of a husband and wife being robbed while a knife is held to the throat of their toddler, two bandits see it best to rape the woman as their final act.

Exhausted by the mixture of newspaper reports of sexual violence and public demands for the death penalty for these acts committed on the most vulnerable where they result in death, I unwrap the culture of sexual harm suffered predominantly by our women and girls, and the underreporting of sexual violence against our boys.



Performance Artist, Fisani Nkomo, Harare, Zimbabwe 2015

In this unwrapping, I pray for the liberation of our men broken by the dangerous expectations of our gender which pushes away our humanity and replaces it with notions of dominance and ownership of public and private spaces that just makes these spaces unsafe for those we see as less powerful and less dominant. In this unwrapping I ask, 'where do boys come to understand their sexual selves and their relationship with their sexual partners?' Boys become men, and it is men in Guyana (and internationally) who make up the majority of sexual offenders.

Who then has been packing sexual violence and male sexual aggression into their social lunch-bags? It is men that young boys look to for guidance as they learn the narrow, repetitive and suffocating language and actions of policed masculine expression. It is the boys they play and laugh with who are also finding their own identities but already mastering homophobia as a weapon, the women who view sexual aggression and prowess as appealing, women and men who view early sexual aggression in boys against girls as an approved guarantee of heterosexuality; and the music and videos and television advertisements and government agency advertisements that all collect within the minds of our boys who are awarded our smiling or silent approval that they are successfully performing one of the most complex shows on earth – masculinity.

The language and visuals of a rape culture, whether spoken during a workplace training session or shown in a government-sponsored video advertisement, endorses the rejection and denial of women's right to their bodies, creates acceptance of the idea that women in public spaces are fair game for picking, and gives way for women's bodies to be traded like currency for community development. In men, it creates an expectation that as part of manhood, we are to do all the above-mentioned things to our women. To violate the order is to go against the 'bro code' punishable by homophobia.

If we follow the logical sequence of events associated with the things mentioned above, we begin to dissect the hundreds of sexual offense cases being heard in the nation's courts, and the thousands more cases going unreported. There must be room for contemplating all the stories in communities where men are accused of attempts to or carrying-out sexual acts against children only for those acts to be settled without reports being made to the authorities.

There must be room further for contemplating well-known characters like the minibus conductors, bus drivers, and taxi drivers whose stories of statutory rape against girls in school uniforms are brushed over as these men score points among their buddies for "chopping", "cutting", "cleaning up", "damaging" our girls – the language of sexual violence used to celebrate their perverted sexual acts and sexual exploits.

In a rape culture, we must teach our boys and our girls to defend themselves and to not be perpetrators, to understand the importance of their personal space from a very early age, and as they grow older we must break the taboo of sex conversations and give our youth an early appreciation for consent and their right to withdraw from sexual activity at any point at all. We are heavily invested in this culture, and disrupting it means re-educating, breaking silences, and reorganizing our people and our institutions. The death penalty doesn't solve anything.

What is Rape?

Rape is sexual contact and/or penetration without consent and with the use of physical force, coercion deception and threat. Victims of rape (sexual contact and/or penetration) may be healthy and 'whole', mentally incapacitated or impaired, awake, asleep or unconscious. The most critical issue regarding the determination of rape is consent (agreement, permission, harmony, consensus, acceptance). Guyana's Sexual Offences Act (2010) criminalizes rape.

Facts about Rape:

- Rape is not necessarily violent
- "No" means "No"
- Silence does not mean "Yes"
- It doesn't matter if you've had sex with the perpetrator before
- It doesn't matter if you are married to the perpetrator
- Sex must be consented each time
- If you do not consent to have sex with your partner/husband/wife, that is rape
- If you had already started, and then you say "No" and your partner continues, that is rape
- "No" means "Stop"
- Rape can include oral or anal penetration
- Penetration is not limited to penile penetration but can include other body parts or objects

Facts about attempted Rape:

- Rape does not have to include penetration.
- If you are sexually violated – that is rape.
- Attempted rape should not be delegitimized because of lack of penetration
- The violence involved in attempted rape is legitimate and can have the same impact on the survivor as a completed rape.
- Rape is not limited to penile penetration.
- Rape can include oral or anal penetration.
- Rape can include other body parts or objects.

Why Silence?

Silence does NOT mean consent

Sexual activity should not take place unless both parties have freely and willingly given consent *and that consent is understood by both parties*. If consent is given under duress (physical or emotional threats), then it is not given freely or willingly and sex with a person consenting under duress is rape. If someone is impaired due to alcohol or drugs, that person is deemed incapable of consenting and sex with that person is rape (even if the impaired person says “yes”).

What does age have to do with rape?

Age: – How old are the participants? Do they have the ability to give consent?

A person under the age of 16 is not legally capable of giving consent. Sexual contact with such a person is considered “statutory rape”, even if the perpetrator did not know the victim was a minor.

Ability to Consent (Capacity to agree): – If one party is somehow disabled, by age, disability, drugs or alcohol, that person might not have had the capacity to agree to sex if the person lacks the capacity to consent, sexual activity with that person is rape.

Agreement to engage in sexual conduct: – If physical force or threats were used to coerce someone into having sex, that sexual activity is rape.



HELP and SHELTER:

If you've been raped, consider taking these steps as outlined in the Guide to the 2010 Sexual Offences Act, created by Help & Shelter, Georgetown, Guyana.

1. Try to get away from the person who raped or sexually assaulted you as soon as possible.
2. Find or ask someone you trust to go with you or take you to report the sexual offence to the police.
3. Report the sexual offence to the police station yourself.
4. If victim is a child (male or female under the age of 18) report the sexual offence to the Child Care & Protection Agency.
5. Keep on the clothes you or the child was wearing and take a change of clothes, including underwear, with you to the police station or if you've taken them off, don't shake or wash them but fold them wrong side out and put them in a paper bag (not a plastic one as it will cause moisture and interfere with DNA evidence) or a clean pillowcase or cloth bag and take it with you, as these clothes will be needed as evidence.
6. Request that a rape kit or other appropriate method for collecting evidence for DNA and other testing is used.
7. Ensure you are given post-exposure-prophylaxis (PEP) treatment for HIV prevention at the hospital.
8. Request emergency contraception (morning after pill) to prevent pregnancy. Emergency contraception is effective if taken within 5 days of being raped.

Until you've been medically examined and a rape kit has been used to collect evidence **do not:**

1. Wash your hands, shower, bathe, douche or clean any part of your body
2. Brush or comb your hair • Brush your teeth.
3. Eat or drink anything or use mouthwash.

Some men in the village would “beat up” their wives: Domestic violence must be dealt with by a team!

By: Michael McGarrell

There is not one day that goes by without us hearing about the violence being meted out against mainly the women in our communities and country. The daily newspapers carry gruesome images of the vicious results. Domestic violence is so commonplace in our society that it seems like we have become callous to it. We would hear repeated acts of violence being committed by our neighbours and do not bat an eye to make a call to the police. We pass it off by saying “dem again!” Have we become zombies, without feelings for our fellow human beings?

Growing up as a child in a remote community far in the interior of Guyana; I can recall times when some men in the village would “beat up” their wives; and many times it was during a party or after a party when they would have consumed alcoholic beverages. Now that I think of it, it was always after some drinking spree that we would hear how someone “beat up” their wife.

I personally have not seen my dad beat my mom neither have I heard that he did. Maybe that is why I am the man I am today. I always prefer to move away from a situation which can lead to me hitting out. This does not mean, that I have not been pushed to the point where I felt like making “all hell break loose”. I have found that the best way to avoid getting physical is to physically remove myself from the situation.

I remember one time, several years ago I slapped a girl who I was with in a relationship. I wanted out of the relationship as she had her main guy and I had met a girl who I was getting “serious with”. When I told her this she got upset and went into the kitchen; I heard her rumbling through the cutlery and I knew that there were knives among them. I left the room to investigate and found her returning with a knife in her hand; I reacted and gave her a “box”; she dropped the knife and left crying, saying she would never return. While I felt a bit happy that she was not going to return I felt a sadness and guilt that I hit her. A few days later I was able see her and said sorry for hitting her. I vowed to never hit a woman again. It just did not feel right and no man should ever do it.

In the community where I grew up, women carry a lot of the heavy loads. Women are strong and are responsible for carrying the Warishi filled with produce from the farms. Many times you will see a man walking with nothing but his arrow and bow, or his shotgun. An outsider may not understand this scene. The reason for this is that the man must be free to shoot game should they come across any in the trail. So there are some cultural and traditional ways which sometimes can be misinterpreted. Domestic violence however is not one of those.

Growing up, our way of living has always been communal; when there was work to do we came together to finish it; when there was a celebration of any kind we all came together in festivity; when there was a death we all mourned; when there was domestic violence we came together and tried to resolve it.

I remember a case when I was a little boy and a man and his wife were fighting, I cannot recall the reason for the fight but it was during a party and they were both intoxicated. Her face was swollen from the punches she received, in her retaliation she chopped up the wooden stock of his shotgun. I remember the elders coming together and going over to their house to talk with them. As curious kids, we too went along to hear what was going on. In the end, they reconciled and put aside their differences and lived happily. The lessons I learned from this and other experiences I was privy to is that domestic violence must be dealt with by a team rather than isolated interventions.

Communities must be a part of the formula to reduce and eventually eliminate all forms of domestic violence. Additionally, if we are to see the reduction of the number of instances we must address the abuse of alcohol which plays a very significant role in creating the environment where our women are being decimated.

FINAL WORDS

By Pauline E. Bullen

It must be repeated, that acts of violence directed at women and girls (VAWG), because they are women and girls, is the most prevalent form of Gender Based Violence (GBV) worldwide and is a manifestation of a particular division of labor that tells a woman that her key responsibility lies within the home, even as she labors in fields outside her home.

Globally, ascribed notions about 'acceptable' behaviors for women and girls that have been shaped and reshaped by a colonial past are a result of racialization, racism and the instituting of difference. Often, and in varied cases according to law, a "woman's place" within the home and community has been classified as lesser and beneath that of her male counterpart whether or not she surmounts it through higher education or by being the principle or sole provider. In Guyana, the "man of the house" continues to be viewed as the "Head of the household" even if expenses are paid out of 'her' pocket and little girls are still expected to be seen and not heard and to not behave "womanish".

Among Caribbean women, including those in Guyana, there is evidence of 'rebellious' behavior, increased sexual agency and open, expressive forms of sexuality that is played out in dance halls, at carnival time and in various other venues. Trotz, 2003 tells us that there is a "reputation-respectability paradigm" that depicts Caribbean women as "repositories of Eurocentric respectability, manifested through their involvement in the churches, emphasis on sexual propriety and marriage, and their identification with the household" (p.7). What is evident in the society however, are individuals who are **not** simply passive "repositories" but individuals who are highly stressed as they resist entrenched British colonial ideas of identity, order and governance, dress, deportment and more. These individuals who are striving to be part of the 21st century do in fact resist, even as they are seemingly forced into the position of receptacle or "repository" by those that profit from their compliance. What is also evident is a high level of corruption that leaves the masses poor and without some crucial basic social services.

As they fight disempowerment, individuals compete for various 'fares' and there is a seeming acceptance of neglect, corruption, being treated unfairly, alcohol and drug abuse, adolescent sexual activity, multiple partnering and incest. As a result, Guyana's diverse households, offices, boardrooms and streets, become spaces of conflict, controversy and abuse.

On March 12, 2018 a News Press Release from the Ministry of the Presidency quoted First Lady, Mrs. Sandra Granger as stating that gender-based violence is "eating away at the soul of our nation". She noted that reported incidents of domestic violence by an intimate partner in Guyana had risen from 74.8 percent in 2011 to 89 percent in 2017, with females accounting for upward of 80 percent of the victims who tended to be between the ages of 16 and 45 years of age. Amongst the causes of the violence against women that Mrs. Granger mentioned was the backlash or "push back" against women's academic and professional development as a result of "expectations created in society by archaic gender roles and norms". Gender Based Violence

indeed eats away at the soul of the nation – its social and economic fabric. It is evident that individuals ‘hustle’ to get where they feel they need to go as quickly as possible, so that at the end of the day they are able to say that they have earned a living wage and are therefore able, at least to some extent, take care of their families and homes. For many however, “home” is a wretched space where feelings of inadequacy lurk – feelings that are part of a brutal colonial legacy of devaluation, vulnerability, exploitation, deliberately manufactured racial divisiveness (construction of the “other”), ethnocentrism and cultural clashes that result in collective pain. With extreme un and under employment and a re-emergence in many cultures of racist and fascist ideas that feed racial, ethnic and religious hatred globally, many individuals have great difficulty achieving sustainable livelihoods and in Guyana this is exacerbated by low school performance and low graduation rates for male students.

At a November 27, 2018 workshop on Gender, Patriarchy and Power organized by the Institute of Gender Studies at the University of Guyana and the Women and Gender Equality Commission, the Registrar shared the fact that 2/3 of the 2018 graduating class was made up of females. Participants at the workshop expressed views that violence and abuse may in fact be as a result of 1) an inability by men to critically examine the personal and systemic reasons for their lack of intellectual prowess 2) feelings of failure 3) frustration, anger and resentment 4) substance abuse (alcohol and drugs) and 5) witnessed and learned behaviours from early childhood. Other pro-active responses needed for change are:

- a) Critically analyzing and challenging traditional painful, oppressive and dangerous practices.
- b) Teaching and preaching against violence in homes, schools, organizations and government.
- c) Give voice and strength to victims through education and economic empowerment programmes.
- d) Develop restorative justice programmes for perpetrators that involve mental health counselling, schooling.
- e) Establish community policing to curtail sexual harassment, rape and theft – all that impact negatively on the lives of girls and women.
- f) Connect specialists to people and services in impoverished and isolated regions of the country.
- g) Engage respected elders in the fight against violence against women and girls by having them speak out about valuing and NOT violating women’s bodies and lives.
- h) Place 24 hour HOT LINES in all regions
- i) Conduct outreach to children and youth through schools and youth groups;
- j) Adopt community based participatory empowerment approaches as part of Gender and Development
- k) Teach EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES, that is, INDIVIDUAL (power within) and COLLECTIVE (power with others)
- l) Let the goal be one of *Social Transformation*
- m) Teach about healthy relationships and how to identify potentially abusive situations;
- n) Protective policies and services;

- o) Work toward changing social structures and norms
- p) Develop more targeted and group specific RADIO DRAMA presentations. See: <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2015/news/guyana/12/15/redesigned-merundoi-website-launched/>
- q) Educate children about sex and sexuality
- r) Form and join support groups (all genders)
- s) Provide free after school and home work programs for Elementary and Secondary school children and youth.

Addressing violence against women and girls is a central development goal in its own right, and key to achieving the 17 sustainable development goals that impact the lives of individual women, their families, communities and nations.

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HELP and SUPPORT

ABUSED? FEELING LOST AND ALONE? TALK TO A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

YOUTH SEEKING HELP

Youth Challenge Guyana facilitates a network of helplines.

Interagency hotline: tel.: 592-223-0001/ 223-0009/ 223-0818

REGION 2: Hope For All: 592-774-4598

REGION 3: Exceptional Centre 4 Children & Youth: +592-674-9673

REGION 4: Caring Hands: 592-227-0996 AND Help & Shelter: 225-4731, 227- 3454

REGION 5: United Bricklayers: 592-333-3322

REGION 6: (New Amsterdam): 592-333-3322; Corentyne: 592-335-3889 Comforting Hearts: 592-333-6351

REGION 10: Linden Care Foundation: 444-2829 or 643-7922

SUICIDE INTERVENTION

The Guyana Inter-agency Suicide Helpline operates 24 hours and is organised by the Guyana Police Force. Telephone: 592-223-0009/223-0818; Cellphone 592-600-7896 (toll free from Digicel phones)

592-623-4444 Email: guyagency@yahoo.com; Bbm pin: 2BE55649, 2BE56020 Twitter: @guyanaagency; Whatsapp: 592-600-7896 592-623-4444

MEDICAL HEALTH CENTRES

Some crisis centres for you to reach out to:

- The Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation: 592-227-8241
- Kitty Health Centre: Tel: 592-225– 9083
- Campbellville Health Centre: 592-226– 6373
- Enmore Health Centre: 592-270– 6899
- Crossroad Suicide & Mental Health Awareness Services Tel: 592-621 8223 (24/7).
- Mental Health Unit at Ministry of Public Health; Director :592-226 1407 Admin: 226 1416; Senior psychologist: 592-226-1405; Social workers : 592-226 1402; Receptionist : 592-225 0804.
- Prevention of Teenage Suicide - Guyana Available for assistance 24/7 viafacebook/email (ptsgorganization@gmail.com).
- Eureka Medical Labs has a Pyschodiagnostic and Family Centre which offers counselling and other psychological services.
- Dr. McRae offers psychiatric services at Woodlands Hospital. The cost is \$6,000/session.
- Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association also offers counselling services for youth, families, couples and other individual. The hotline is 592-225-6493
- ASPIRE Youth Network facilitates sessions on Mental Health & Wellness Email Address: aspireyngy@gmail.com Contact: 592-688-8429. **There are no costs involved.**
- The Phoenix Recovery Project helps with addiction to drugs and alcohol: Tel 592-220-6825 .

Phoenix can give information about the location of other Alcoholics Anonymous meetings at other locations. Alcoholics Anonymous: Tuesdays 6-7:30pm; Cocaine Anonymous: Thursdays 6-7:30pm Narcotics Anonymous: Sundays 6:30- 8pm Al-Anon (Georgetown only); **For relatives of those who have alcohol problems. Tel. 592-233-5844/600 0832**

EDUCATION- EMPOWERMENT

- **Institute of Gender Studies**, University of Guyana: 592-624-4113; igs@uog.edu
- Sunrise Center: Lot 1 Zorg en Vlygt, Essequibo offers free walk-in counselling 6 days a week. (New centres to open up near Lamaha/Camp Street
- Roadside Baptist Skills Training Centre (Region 6) – 592-338-4215/4213.
- (E Section 'C' Enterprise, East Coast Demerara (ECD)
- **Brahma Kumaris**: Offers free courses in Meditation, Positive Thinking, Self Esteem and Stress Free Living at its Centre. Courses can also be requested at other locations. Open to all. 75 High Street, Kingston, Georgetown. Tel 592-227 2538.
- FACT (Family Awareness, Consciousness, Togetherness). Contact: Annette Jaundoo; #78 Village Corentyne, Berbice; Tel.: 592-335-3990 or 663-2009
- Guyana Savers- Contact: Leslyn Holder: Tel.: 639-1189; Domestic Violence Coordinator, Valini Leitch; Contact: 592-643-0631.
- CAFRA Guyana- (Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action):
Email: cafragy@yahoo.com.
- Guyana Trans United Tel.: 592-231-4703; Contact: Executive Director, Ms. Quincy McEwan.

SOCIAL SERVICES

- **SASOD** (Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination). Free counselling service available. To book, call 225-7283 or 623-5155. Appointments usually take place between 9am and 9pm on weekdays, but weekend appointments can also be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Ministry of Social Protection; Gender Affairs Bureau; Hymwattie Lagan, 592-225-4362/592-672-1653;
- Guyana Foundation Call Miriam Roberts to get assistance, Tel: 592-671 4114 (working hours but she will do her best to return calls).



Helping Agencies

Organisation	Address	Telephone	Organisation/Address	Offices	Telephone
Help & Shelter	D' Urban Park, Homestretch Avenue, Georgetown	225-4731, 227-3454 227 – 8353	Police A' Division Georgetown/ East Bank Demerara	Divisional Commander Second- In Command – Officer-In-Charge Impact Base Divisional Detective Officer (Crime) Divisional Operations Room	226-1389/227-2128 226-7476 227-2610 226-7065 227-1611, 227-1149
Ministry Of Labour, Human Services And Social Security	1 Cornhill & Water Sts.	227-4319 225-6212 220-2354	Police B' Division (Berbice)	Divisional Commander Second In-Command Divisional Detective Officer (Crime) Divisional Operations Room	333-3876 333-2485 333-5564 333-2151, 333-2152
Child Protection Agency	Broad & Charles Sts. Charlestown	227-0979 227-4420 227-4082 225-1257	'C' Division (East Coast Demerara)	Divisional Commander Second- In Command Divisional Detective Officer (Crime) Divisional Operations Room	229-2289 229-2569 229-2557 229-2700 To 3
Guyana (Georgetown) Legal Aid	Charlotte & King Sts.	225-9238 225-9246 225-6896	'D' Division (West Demerara/East Bank Essequibo)	Divisional Commander Second- In Command Divisional Detective Inspector (Crime) Divisional Operations Room	268-2343/268-2223 268-2298 268-2222 268-2222, 268-2328
Essequibo Legal Aid	Rdc Compound, Anna Regina	771-4007/8	'E' Division (Linden/Kwakwani)	Divisional Commander Second -In Command Divisional Detective Inspector (Crime) Divisional Operations Room	444-3406 444-3297 444-3274 444-3512 Or 444-3297
West Coast Berbice Legal Aid	Rdc Compound, Fort Wellington	232 0952, 0953	'F' Division (Interior Locations)	Divisional Commander Divisional Detective Officer (Crime) Officer -In-Charge Mabaruma Police Station Officer- In-Charge Bartica Police Station Officer- In-Charge Lethem Police Station	226-1333 225-2722 777-5007 455-2241 772-2087
Berbice Legal Aid	Rdc Compound New Amsterdam	333 5254	'G' Division (Essequibo Coast And Islands)	Divisional Commander Second-In-Command In-Charge (Crime) Divisional Operations Room	771-4010 771-4012 777-5360 771-5004/771-4222
Red Thread	72 Adelaide & Princess St, Charlestown	227-7010 223- 6254	GRPA	70 Quamina St, Georgetown	225-0738, 225-0738, 225-3286



The Editor



Pauline E. Bullen, PhD

The “Instigator” and Editor of ISSUES Guyana and the Director of the Institute of Gender Studies (IGS) University of Guyana, Turkeyen campus is Guyanese born, Pauline E. Bullen, an Interdisciplinary, International, Feminist scholar and “Educulturalist” with a PhD in Sociology and Equity Studies in Education from OISE, University of Toronto (2007). Her work is informed by her lived experiences in Guyana, Canada, Nigeria, USA and Zimbabwe and by her belief that, in order to become productive citizens, all individuals should have opportunities to expand their worldviews by looking not only inward, but also outward to the culture(s) around them.

The Contributors



Michael Griffith is a Guyanese visual artist who has been in love with the arts from a very young age. He is a past student of The Burrows School of Arts, where in 2010 he graduated at the top of his class. Then in 2017 he completed his studies at the University of Guyana, where he again graduated at the top of his class. As a relatively young visual artist, Michael has had the pleasure of exhibiting his works both nationally and internationally. In 2015 He was selected to represent Guyana at Carifest. He is the holder of several National first Prizes and says he believes that Art should be like meditation, it should interrupt the monotony of our busy minds and offer us a moment of escape.



Nkofi Hodge is a 22-year-old Environmental Studies graduate from the University of Guyana. He is an activist, actor and proud Lindener (Linden, Guyana). He is interested in energy and energy efficiency, Sustainable Development and Environmental Chemistry.



Alim Hosein born in Lusignan, East Coast Demerara, Guyana, he has lectured at the University of Guyana for over 30 years, holds a Masters Degree in Linguistics, is the current Head of the Department of Language and Cultural Studies and lectures in Linguistics and Art. His great interest in languages, literatures, Art and culture has led him to chair several national Arts committees, coordinate the Guyana Visual Arts Competition and Exhibition and publish Art criticism in *Stabroek News*. He is the recipient of a 2003 Award for Distinguished Service from the University of Guyana and a 2018 Golden Arrow of Achievement National award.

Annamore Jamu is a Medical Doctor in Harare, Zimbabwe, Southern Africa. She holds a Masters in Epidemiology (Public Health), Diploma HIV Management, (MBA), Ex Zimbabwe Republic Police Director of Medical Services.



Michael M. Khan also known as ‘Ole Man Pappie’ is an Artist, Designer, Dramatic Storyteller, Children Entertainer with 37 Clown years. He received a Diploma in Art Education from the E.R. Burrowes School of Art, a B.A.-Art from the University of Guyana and a Masters Degree in International Education from Framingham State College.



Vidyaratha Kissoon lives in Guyana. He has been involved in the work to promote gender equality and child protection. He is a workshop leader, part-time lecturer at the University of Guyana and a creative and expressive writer. He blogs at <http://churchroadman.blogspot.com/>



Neil Marks was born in 1980, the year Forbes Burnham became president and a new constitution was introduced in Guyana. He spent the first two years of his life in the Tiger Bay ghetto and then moved from place to place - La Grange, Enmore, Vreed-en-hoop and East Bank Essequibo. Neil has spent the last 20 years as a print and broadcast reporter in Guyana and is the immediate past president of the Guyana Press Association. He currently works as the Guyana stringer for Reuters and also functions as an Editorial Consultant with the News Room on Enetworks. His work has appeared in the New York Times, the UK Guardian and the BBC.



Michael McGarrell is of the Patamuna nation from the village of Chenapou on the Potaro River, 29 miles upriver from the Kaieteur Falls. He works at the Amerindian Peoples Association and is committed to fighting to see the rights of indigenous peoples protected and respected in Guyana first and around the world. He is also the Coordinator of Human Rights and Policies at COICA, an organization of the Amazon basin made up of nine countries.



Peter Persaud is President of the Amerindian Action Movement of Guyana (TAAMOG) and serves as that organization's representative at the Women and Gender Equality Commission. An Indigenous Peoples Rights expert, trained by the International Training Centre of Indigenous Peoples (ITCIP) based in Nuuk, Greenland. He holds a certificate in Supervisory Management from the University of Guyana and currently lives in Georgetown.



Michael E. Benza Scott a Guyanese and a Full Professor of Social Sciences in Public Management at the University of Guyana is currently the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Engagement and the first assistant to the Vice-Chancellor. Professor Scott is an Educator and Social Scientist, with a working career of over 45 years spanning the worlds of teaching, research, regional examination assessment, public management, academic institutional management and social assessments and audits of forests and education institutions. He is also a published author and co-author of several scholarly pieces of work on governance and the public sector. Other publications include two books of poetry on diverse subjects including "Poems of Praise" published in 2017. He holds a PhD in Social Sciences and Administration, an MA in Methods of Analysis in International Studies.



Lenox Shuman an airline pilot by profession was elected Toshao of Pakuri Village in July, 2015 and Vice-Chairman of the National Tshaos Council (NTC) the following December. As Chief of Pakuri Village, Lenox Shuman ended his three-year term as village leader in May 2018.



Raymond Talovera graduated from Brooklyn College, City University of New York with a Bachelors in Radio and Television in 2015 and a Masters of Arts degree in Cultural Studies/Critical Theory and Analysis from the University of Southern California. Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, he continues to write and produce music and short films that speak to the experiences of himself and the experiences of the intersectional identities he has come into contact with. He aspires to be a voice in music that expands on the experiences of underserved youth and encourages travel and interactions with other communities.



Derwayne Wills is a young Guyanese born writer, who has written for print and online media and is published in Guyana, the Caribbean and internationally. He is a youth, gender and migrant rights advocate, and the interim Chairman of the Guyana National Youth Council. Derwayne is completing his degree in Sociology at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus where he has worked closely with the Institute for Gender and Development Studies.