



CIPRIANI COLLEGE
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WORK MATTERS

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Discussing Crime and Security in Trinidad and Tobago.

If we are truthful to ourselves, we can say without hesitation that our fears are many and varied. Members of the society of different social, gender, and age categories are haunted by their fears. There are also fears that we all share. Society today is characterized by a combination of elements that can be referred to as the disembeddedness of everyday life, the awareness of pluralism of values, and individualism which presents the achievement of self-realization as an ideal.

Violence is today diffusing at an alarming pace and society is having a difficult time coping with it. The social roots of these acts of diffused violence appear to be based on the desegregation of the organizing principles of social solidarity, and the crisis of the traditional conception of social rights to provide a framework for thinking about the excluded.

Social reality is today assuming the existence of insuperable conflicts. We are living in a conflictual society in which plurality, discontinuity, and dispersal exist. We are experiencing the phenomenon of disaffiliation and the breakdown of relations of 'otherness', as well as the dilution of the bonds between oneself and the other. Today, inclusion and exclusion are occurring concurrently, creating the formation of a bulimic society where massive cultural inclusion is accompanied by systematic structural exclusion.

Changes are taking place in social institutions such as the family, religion and the justice system (police, prisons, mental health) in effect, transforming the socialization processes. As such it is arguable that society is going through crisis and a process of deinstitutionalization; which will affect the way we relate to ourselves, and others in society.

The landscape of insecurity and uncertainty is very evident. Crime and violence are being transformed in society, becoming more banal, violent, and savage with the passing of time. Further, this violence is evident in not only crime, but also, social exclusion, gender vio-

lence, structural violence; all of which manifest in the social institutions that are supposed to assist, aide and support the citizens, and protect us from such violence. The definition of crime as we know it, seemed to have changed over time, and the discussion of crime has become increasingly political and problematic. We need to make the link between aggression, its prevalence and acceptance and its influence of the types of crime that exist. This then leads to discussions about the levels of acceptance and desensitization to acts of aggression, as well as anti-social and criminal behaviour in society. In contemporary parlance, crime is so widespread, that has become part of the 'new normal' as it is seen as part of the continuum of social normality.

Crime's relationship with society is constitutive and this results in the creation of space for action which is both public and private. These actions occur in social spaces where disputes can occur, such as homes, neighbourhoods, malls, streets, bars, theatres, and other common spaces. The social control of crime has expanded to include the cooperation and coordination of multiple government agencies, as well as the expansion of private security firms in the society. This would seem to suggest that possibly, the formal agencies of social control have been waning in their power and influence, and as such, have less efficacy and efficiency in contemporary times.

We are today taking part in a civilization where everyone is experiencing a generalized feeling of discontent. This malaise is transforming society into an obsessive preoccupation with individualism and personal safety. Social inequality becomes the central concept to explain the roots of violence, so we all can express how we feel about the kind of processes that are responsible for the inequality that we are experiencing, real or imagined.

In conclusion, as members of this society, we must recognize that there is still work to be done before we can accomplish the feeling of a safe society, and this includes understanding the contributors to social inequality, oppression and frustration, as well as the re-so-

cialization of our community to possibly re-think the concepts of individual achievement vs community-oriented progress. The social world has created dangerous and oppressive trends in crime and crime control that have occurred in the last decade that are fundamentally rooted in the political economy, and as Gramsci elucidated; the institutions do the work of socializing members of society into the norms, values, and beliefs. As such, it can be argued, that the group that controls these institutions controls the rest of society.

Valentine Smith PhD
Senior Fellow, CCLCS