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Safeguarding Quality of Life: Debunking the myth of desensitization in Crime-riddled societies.

In societies plagued by rampant crime and violence, the general feeling of insecurity casts a lingering shadow over daily life, shaping perceptions, behaviors, and even societal norms. From urban centers to rural communities, the anticipation of crime looms large, breeding mistrust, and a sense of vulnerability among residents. Yet, amidst the backdrop of endemic insecurity, there exists a prevailing myth—that individuals in crime-riddled societies become desensitized to the violence and danger that surrounds them. However, upon closer examination, this notion of desensitization reveals itself to be nothing more than a facade, concealing the profound impact that insecurity has on individuals and communities alike.

In communities already grappling with high levels of violence, the preservation of quality-of-life hinges upon strategic interventions to address pressing security issues, these interventions should include physiological and mental health mediations as the effect of insecurity permeates every aspect of daily life, the reality is that people are simply not coping.

As I flurry to submit this article, my own colleague showed up to work and carried out her duties which was a pressing interview at the top of the day among other obligations and announced after completing several tasks for the morning, that she had had her car stolen that very morning while hurrying out for work herself. Her demeanor showed no sense of urgency or was she perturbed as to what transpired only hours before, and she seemed to be managing; however an undertone of adrenaline, I believe, can be blamed for her bravery on display. As her colleagues around her marveled at the show of strength and resilience in the moment, we all wondered how she got over the terror of discovering that she had been robbed. While somewhere in the backdrop another colleague gleamingly summed up her composure to how desensitized we have all become and how normalized crime is in our society.

Larceny does so much more than remove an article

from your possession, but it robs you of your dignity, threatens to introduce paralyzing feelings of fear, and offsets anger as you come to terms with the unwarranted and unexpected violation meted to you.

According to reports by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), ‘the impact of victimization is under researched and therefore does not give us a clear understanding of the cost of crime on the individual and the long-lasting psychological effects that crime may have on people’. If we are to make meaningful and impactful strides in crime-fighting strategies, examining the effects and analyzing its data is in my opinion imminent and imperative. As I impress upon you the urgency needed for our people seriously struggling, sure strategic interventions aimed at enhancing community safety must address root causes of violence, including socio-economic disparities, lack of access to education and employment opportunities, and inadequate social services but also must include an examination of the ingrained psychosocial propensity that besets us to so easily violate the rule of law and the perceived ability to survive it.

In the last 15-20 years we have been seeing a rapid increase in insecurity in the Caribbean, the “why” is to be argued as the world grapples with varying levels and manifestations of insecurity, however a study of the “how we are coping” with the trauma of sustained crime and violence, needs attention. The results of this are important to understanding what the next 10 years could look like, and the interventions and resources needed to stem a more looming non-physical problem. Some societies, if not all, in varying degrees have wondered about the deeply spiritual nature of what has transpired over the years. Our elderly bemoan the old days and our young do not have a sense of peace.

Assault, rape, burglary, motor vehicle theft and kidnapping are all personal crimes most common to the region as outlined by the UNODC which declares that this sort of acts severely violates the integrity of the victim.

In reality, the normalization of insecurity perpetuates a cycle of fear and resignation. Rather than accepting insecurity as an inevitable aspect of daily life, societies must begin to confront its root causes and work towards creating environments where safety in all forms is upheld. By challenging the myth of desensitization and acknowledging the deep impact of insecurity, we can pave the way for meaningful change through strategic informed planning.

While it may seem tempting to believe that desensitization to insecurity provides a semblance of control and manageability, this assumption in my opinion does not hold. The notion that individuals can adapt to chronic insecurity and develop a false sense of coping denies the profound toll that living in constant fear takes on mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Far from rendering life more manageable, desensitization to insecurity masks the true extent of trauma, stress, and psychological harm inflicted upon individuals and communities to include especially the harrowing effects on our children.

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