



**CIPRIANI COLLEGE**  
OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES



# **WORK MATTERS COLUMN**

**FEBRUARY 2025**

# Public Confidence in the TTPS

The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service's (TTPS) motto remains "Protect and Serve with P.R.I.D.E" but we the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago incontestably, often do not feel protected or served. Based on the current crime situation, I can declare with the utmost certainty that segments of the public are losing faith in the TTPS. It has been argued that the Police Service in Trinidad and Tobago, like most government agencies, is riddled with corruption and subpar service. Crime in Trinidad and Tobago has been on a steady incline with murders recorded almost, it not daily. The response of the TTPS has been and continues to be reactive and not proactive. It is easier to tell the public to "protect" themselves from crime rather than having an actual realistic plan of action to reduce the murder and crime rates. There are several noteworthy issues that I have as it pertains to the TTPS such as lack of accountability and poor service which results in the decrease of public trust.

As the law enforcement agency of Trinidad and Tobago, I believe that the TTPS should undeniably take accountability for the shortcomings within the agency. If we are to really take a firm stance against crime, the police service will need to undergo some changes. I would like to know, after joining the police force, to what standards are officers held? Police officers are probably the most susceptible to bribes, and dealing with criminal elements directly, temptations of bribery may run high. To ensure that standard exists, I strongly suggest that members of the TTPS complete regular polygraphs, psychological and fitness tests. Though these tests are just the bare minimum, to ensure the highest standard of police officers employed in the service, they should be implemented regularly.

It goes without contention, and I can agree that the TTPS has formidable challenges providing

the required customer service. Oftentimes, we hear reports of unpleasant experiences when citizens go to stations to report crimes. Asking for assistance in a police station on the island feels like creating an inconvenience for the officers, and whether in person and on the phone, the perception is the same. There seems to be a need to increase training in the TTPS, especially in relation to communication and interaction with the public. To inspire confidence in the TTPS, we need to feel that our reports are received with some sense of urgency, and the interaction with the officers cannot be coloured with aggression, apathy, or impatience.

Apart from one of the worst customer service experiences you can experience in Trinidad and Tobago, some officers try to be "too friendly." Why are you flirting with someone that came to do a Certificate of Character? While this experience may not represent the whole, some male police officers certainly know how to make women feel uncomfortable. This is why we need regular training in customer service, anger management classes as well as the aforementioned psychological tests to ensure that officers are capable of not only protecting the public, but serving as well.

I would also like to add that I find it somewhat challenging to place my trust in the police service, as it is irrational to have enhanced trust in the law enforcement agency with such a mediocre crime detection rate. The crime detection rate in Trinidad and Tobago has never been where it should be. People often joke that you can get away with any crime in Trinidad, which with every passing year seems to be an increasingly accurate statement. It has become a universal feeling that when you become a victim of a crime you already come to terms with the fact that justice will not be served. Being a

victim of crime in Trinidad and Tobago is a “hard luck” or “wrong place wrong time” situation. Personally, I have been a victim of crime and all you can do is cry and then move on. Victims become just another statistic, and the perpetrators go on to continue to wreak havoc in our society. Further, there seem to be a lot of victim-blaming when you become a victim of crime. “Why didn’t you do this?” or “you should have done this.” It is easier to reprimand us, the victims, than seek out and punish the perpetrator. Thereby, the desire to have trust in the police service remains a distant desire.

The TTPS has several issues existing within the agency that ought to be addressed as part of a conscious effort to work towards an island wide crime reduction goal. Notably, a lack of accountability and poor customer service unequivocally results in the public’s weakened trust in the police service. It is to be duly noted that a reimagining of the Trinidad and Tobago Police

Service is not the answer to deter crime but instead a long overdue start to protecting and serving with  
P.R.I.D.E.

---

**Iyana John,**  
OJT  
(IIR,UWI)