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***Arrested Development: The Political
Origins and Socio-Economic
Foundations of Common Violence in
Jamaica***

**Imani Duncan-Waite¹,
Michael Woolcock²**

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¹ Caribbean Policy Research Institute

² Brooks World Poverty Institute,
University of Manchester, and GIGA
German Institute of Global and Area
Studies

imaniduncan@gmail.com
michael.woolcock@manchester.ac.uk

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Abstract

A recurring theme in the literature on common violence is that it stems from the combined impact of divided societies (poverty, ethnic diversity, economic inequality) and weak institutions (non-democratic, authoritarian government). This statistical regularity may hold in the aggregate, but as such it generates some instructive “outliers”. Jamaica, for example, is not especially poor, has a virtually mono-ethnic population, relatively low levels of economic inequality, and has been steadily democratic since independence, but is yet among the most violent countries in the world. Why is this? How does one explain variations over time and place in the levels of violence? Drawing on extensive field research in Kingston’s garrison communities, we argue that Jamaica generally, and Kingston in particular, experiences high levels of common violence because Jamaica is in fact neither “cohesive” nor “democratic”, displaying instead important context-specific sources of social division and institutional weakness. A powerful regional political economy clearly constrains Jamaica’s policy options, but given its nascent democratic institutions, external and domestic development actors alike can best assist efforts to lower common violence by recognizing and rewarding what Jamaican civil society organisations are doing already.

I. Introduction

The only hope I see right here now is violence on top of more violence, because things are still not right...[R]ight now I can't tell you about any hope for anything because I don't see any hope. Because the younger generation is the hope. And it's them that's doing the killing; it's them dying... They are the ones who are to carry what we set in place to a higher level, but the higher level is violence...

It's like when you throw a stone in the water, and you see ripples. And if you disturb the water and it's not a good disturbance, it's hell to stop that ripple. And the people are like the water... It's hell to stop that, right down the line it goes... It won't change until the communities, not only this community, but all communities, come together, and put all the right things in place.

'Finger', an elder from one of the stronghold inner-city communities

Common violence is a major concern in cities throughout the world, affecting everyone from the first-time visitor to everyday residents to seasoned political leaders. It is a particularly significant issue for developing countries, where urban areas continue to attract large numbers of migrants in all their social and economic diversity, despite crumbling infrastructure, inadequate public services, and insufficient housing stock (Davis 2006). Highly concentrated poor urban populations are also more easily politicized (Varshney 2002). Failure to manage this potentially volatile mix erodes the well-being of individual citizens, the quality of life of entire communities, and the confidence of foreign investors.¹ Common violence is a symptom of (and in turn increases the likelihood of) such failure, but unfortunately we know more about its general causes and consequences than specifically what might be done about it in any concrete situation, largely because policy elites lack a tradition of conducting and incorporating theoretically informed, empirically grounded country case studies into their decision-making apparatus.

The case of Jamaica, in particular its capital city Kingston, offers an important opportunity for correcting this imbalance, for two primary reasons. First, it offers an instructive twist on the empirical relationship between governance, social divisions, and common violence. On the one hand, as a formally democratic, relatively equal, and essentially mono-ethnic nation, Jamaica should, according to the literature (discussed below), have little violence at all—i.e., the nature of its political institutions and social structures should have precluded latent conflict from becoming violent. But Jamaica's conflict has been very violent—according to various measures, after Johannesburg and Rio de Janeiro, Kingston is the most violent city

¹ On the broader economic impacts of crime and violence, see Fajnzylber, Lederman, and Loayza (2000).

in the world². Moreover, the violence has largely been created and perpetuated by erstwhile *democratic* political parties. On the other hand, democratic institutions and processes have also created the spaces in which civil society organisations have been able to respond constructively and collectively to violence. What are the implications of this unlikely result for general theories of political and common violence? Second, it represents a rare but informative case of civil society organisations and policy interventions succeeding, at least for a while, in curbing an extended period of violent conflict in a developing country. Violence that had risen steadily for nearly three decades and continues to rise today fell dramatically in the period from 1997 to mid-2001. How was this achieved? What does the subsequent resumption of violence suggest regarding the limits of such interventions? Under what conditions are community organisations effective in responding to violence? How can external agents and domestic constituencies best articulate their particular skills and resources to effect constructive and lasting change?

We argue that the prevailing theory does actually explain the Jamaican case quite well, but only by giving close attention to the context-specific forms and functions of Jamaica's social divisions and weak institutions. Drawing on formal data on violence and detailed interviews with politicians, community leaders, crime bosses, and everyday citizens, we show that common violence in Jamaica stems from social divisions borne of (a) dualistic, clearly-delineated, and ruthlessly enforced local political identities (referred to by Jamaicans as 'political tribalism') sustained by a criminal underworld but engineered and mobilized over generations by key figures in the two dominant political parties, and (b) rigid barriers to upward (and downward) economic mobility that undermine, particularly among the young, the sense that neither honest effort by the poor nor flagrant rules violation by the rich has lasting consequences. The effects of these distinctive social divisions are compounded by (c) a weak institutional environment best characterized as kleptocratic "machine politics", one that overtly appropriates democratic discourse and procedures to gain control of the state while simultaneously exploiting the disadvantages of smallness (nepotism, low capacity civil service) and location (popular perception as an island paradise, lucrative revenues from the inter-American drug trade) to insulate itself from basic local and international pressures for ensuring accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. Some, but by no means all, of these features are captured in aggregate statistics on "governance", "institutional quality", and "inequality", strongly suggesting that broad cross-national studies (of a host of economic, political, and social outcomes) need to be complemented by detailed country

² According to figures from the United Nations, United Nations Secretary General's report, 'Measures to Regulate Firearms', 15/1997/4. For 2000 the total number of homicides for Jamaica numbered 887 of which guns

case studies to discern useful and feasible policy responses to common violence in particular contexts.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section II reviews both the historical development of common violence in Jamaica and the broader literature on violence, political conflict, and economic performance. We build on this material to show why further insights into understanding the case of Jamaica may have significance elsewhere. In Section III we outline the methodology of our study, while Section IV presents the findings, and our analysis and interpretation of them. Section V discusses the broader theoretical issues raised by this analysis and concludes with a discussion of the implications for both domestic policy responses to, and civil society strategies for dealing with, common violence in Jamaica.

II. Setting the Stage

Every morning on the front page of *The Daily Gleaner*, Kingston's daily newspaper, a small box grimly informs readers of the number of people murdered the previous day, and the cumulative total for the year. During the period in which we were conducting our fieldwork, it was not uncommon to learn that a dozen people had been killed on the very day and in the very communities in which we were working. These base statistics underlie Kingston's dubious status as the third most violent city in the world³, and Jamaica itself as the country with the world's highest homicide rate.⁴ Given Jamaica's small population (2.78 million people in 2007), and the high proportion that live in the greater Kingston area (roughly 44%)⁵, the violence that pervades everyday life in the capital exerts its perverse influence on the entire country (Clarke 2006).

The current wave of crime and violence in Jamaica has its origins in the late 1960s, but began to steadily increase in the 1970s. The violence grew so severe during this period that in 1976 the Prime Minister of the (left-wing) People's National Party, Michael Manley,

accounted for 536 or 60 percent. Just over 55 percent of homicides that year were located in Kingston and St. Andrew.

³ However, as of 2004 Kingston was no longer the murder capital of Jamaica; Spanish Town assumed that dubious honour. Over the last two decades, more than 55% of the murders in Jamaica have occurred in Kingston, and it was for this reason that we elected to conduct our fieldwork in Kingston, the better to observe more durable mechanisms by which common violence is perpetuated.

⁴ In 2005, Jamaica passed South Africa and Columbia to hold top slot as the "murder capital of the world", with a murder rate of 60 persons per 100,000 inhabitants and an average of 5 people getting murdered per day. See http://www.bbc.co.uk/caribbean/news/story/2006/01/060103_murderlist.shtml, January 3, 2006. However, in 2006, Jamaica's murder rate declined by 20% compared to the same period January – May 2005. Source: The Jamaica Constabulary Force: Constabulary Communications Network, June 2006. (To place in context, that means moving from 4-5 murders per day to 3-4 murders per day).

⁵ Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica, 2000 (PIOJ). The 'Kingston Area' refers to the proximate urban areas of Kingston, St. Andrew and St. Catherine.

declared a national State of Emergency. In 1978, the reggae icon Bob Marley—who grew up in Trench Town (one of the so-called “garrison communities” of Kingston)—attempted to bring the political parties together by organizing the ‘One Love Peace’ concert. He brought Edward Seaga, the (right-wing) Jamaica Labor Party leader, and Manley together on stage, and held hands with both of them to symbolically mark a new era of cooperation. Other concerts and related social initiatives were held, including the establishment of several community-based organisations such as peace councils, but the violence did not end. In the 1980s and early 1990s the garrison communities (the political units that define the poor inner-city areas of Kingston) became central locations for the drug trade, acting as a conduit through which marijuana and cocaine were transported to the United States. During this period the drug economy supplanted politics as the driving force behind the violence between rival communities, undermining efforts (such as mandating curfews, implementing ‘task forces’, training more police) by community-based organisations, politicians, and even drug lords (‘Dons’) themselves to reverse the trend. Election turnouts in 1993 were the lowest in Jamaican history as political parties, and with them their allied garrison communities, fought openly and violently to either attain or retain power. These unhappy trends continued through the mid 1990s: 780 murders were reported in 1995, 925 in 1996 and 1,038 in 1997. (The number of homicides thus rose 33% in only three years.)

Suddenly and unexpectedly, however, during the late 1990s, the situation began to improve considerably, even as the country’s economic woes continued unabated. Between 1997 and 2000, the incidents of murder declined by 18%, rape 22%, robberies by 31% and shootings by 31%.⁶ While Jamaica’s homicide rate in 1998—33 per 100,000—was still unacceptably high at six times the global average, the downward trend was at once promising and illuminating. Unhappily, the violence resumed again in April 2001, with murder rates exceeding those of 1997. In 2001, there were 1,138 murders; per head, only Colombia and Central America had more killings (*Economist* 2002). The violence carried over into 2002, and continued in the lead-up to the national elections held that year, though the number of reported murders for 2002 was 1040, slightly less than in 2001. The following year, 2003, also saw a further decline with reported murders numbering 936. However, for 2004 and 2005, the number of reported murders was 1430 and 1674 respectively.⁷ The four year period from early 1997 through early 2001 was the longest period of relatively low murders, and it was concentrated in one area. How did Jamaica initially succeed in stemming the tide of violence, and what factors seem to have lead to its resumption and perpetuation?

⁶ Statistics Unit, Jamaica Constabulary Force

⁷ Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica, PIOJ (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005)

Careful examination of the most recent data shows that in 1998, the first year of the decline, the reduction in the murder rate was largely limited to the Kingston Western division⁸, where the number of murders fell by an incredible 51%; for most of the other police divisions in the Kingston Metropolitan Area, the murder rate remained stable. According to Harriott (2000: 20), “If improved policing was the primary factor responsible for the decline, then a more even reduction across various divisions would have been expected.” The decline in the murder rate, and common violence more generally, may thus be related to other factors in the Kingston Western division, an area primarily comprised of inner-city communities. This paper seeks to uncover some of these other factors, to explore their cumulative impact on Kingston’s economic and social development, to understand how the relationship between political institutions and social organisations has shaped the trajectory of common violence in Kingston, and to integrate the findings into a more general explanation for the rise, decline, and rise again of common violence in Jamaica.

Explaining Common Violence in Jamaica

In several respects, Jamaica’s high level of violence is hard to explain. According to several influential cross-national studies (e.g., Collier 1999, Rodrik 1999, Easterly 2001), violence occurs in countries with (a) weak institutions for managing economic crises and political conflict, and (b) low levels of social cohesion (that is, high levels of poverty, economic inequality, and ethnic diversity⁹). In such countries, citizens feel little sense of collective ownership of, pride in, or responsibility for their nation’s fortunes, since different demographic groups effectively live in different worlds, with correspondingly different identities, loyalties, and interests. Wealthy elites, for example, can compensate for inadequate public goods such as education, health care, transport, and policing by purchasing them privately, while the poor masses are left to make do with sub-standard and overwhelmed public services, cynically (but accurately) believing that their welfare is of little concern to political leaders. In repressive authoritarian regimes, citizens denied “voice” and with little grounds for “loyalty” instead vent their grievances, frustrations, and dissent through civil disobedience, “exit”, or, ultimately, violence. Illusory good times—such as periods of high economic growth generated by natural resource booms—mask the importance of these social cleavages, but economic (and other) crises expose and exacerbate them.

⁸ Kingston Western is the police demarcation for the area comprising of two political constituencies: Western Kingston and South St. Andrew. Though the communities under study, Trench Town and Jones Town, are actually in the electoral constituency of South St. Andrew, they border the political constituency Western Kingston, Tivoli and Matthew’s Lane. These two constituencies have historically been at war with each other.

⁹ Collier (1999) argues that ‘moderate’ rather than ‘high’ ethnic diversity drives conflict; either way, Jamaica’s level of ethnic diversity is neither moderate nor high. In his most recent work, Collier (2006) stresses the importance of topography and ‘loot-able’ natural resources (rather than ethnic diversity or inequality), since they can provide a ready source of finance for rebel groups. Violence in Jamaica is not usually considered to be at a level constituting a civil war (though with more than 1000 people now murdered each year, it passes the formal

Without adequate institutions for managing emergent conflicts and crises, political leaders have little room for maneuver to implement the necessary policy changes, and are forced instead to make ill-conceived and expedient “reforms” that merely buy off the moment’s most influential interest group. In short, sustained and high levels of violence are symptomatic of weak states and divided societies.

While this model seemingly holds up impressively across a range of countries and contexts, it finds in Jamaica a conspicuous outlier. Jamaica’s ethnic diversity, for example, as measured by the ubiquitous (if problematic) ethno-linguistic fractionalization (ELF) index, has a score (5) comparable to Sweden; its level of economic inequality, while not low, is not particularly high either, with a Gini coefficient (0.42) comparable to that of France.¹⁰ With a per capita gross national income in 2006 (in purchasing power parity terms) of \$7050¹¹, Jamaica is comparable to Thailand and Ecuador and thus a solidly “middle income” country (i.e., not especially poor). Moreover, on any generally accepted political measure, Jamaica is a “consolidated democracy” (Linz and Stepan 1997)¹². For well over half a century governments have been chosen and removed through relatively free and fair elections. No government has ever been overturned by popular uprising, military coup or extra-constitutional means. On the basis of election results, ruling parties have handed over power and oppositions have peacefully acceded to office in 1955, 1962, 1972 and 1989. Munroe (1996) asserts that by the 1990s, two party competition and electoral participation had become more institutionalized in Jamaica than anywhere else in the Caribbean, or indeed throughout the developing world. Electoral democracy has been reinforced and complemented by high levels of freedom; political rights and civil liberties are constitutionally recognized and effectively utilized, and are recognized as such by Freedom House measures¹³. By and large, for much of the post-independence period the rule of law has been observed, despite increasingly high levels of violent crime. Knowing nothing else, then, these general features would lead one to predict that Jamaica should be a politically peaceful, economically stable, and increasingly prosperous country. Unfortunately for this model and for Jamaicans, it is none of these things for most of its citizens. Why?

definitional threshold), but even so the violence is not meted out through ‘rebel groups’ hostile to the state, but rather *democratic* political parties.

¹⁰ Jamaica does have a relatively high land inequality score (0.80), though it is comparable to that of Costa Rica, and is considerably lower than Australia, Barbados, Peru, and Argentina. (This and related data in this section are derived from the social cohesion dataset in Easterly, Ritzen, and Woolcock, 2000).

¹¹ World Bank (2008). In 2007 (based on data from 2005), Jamaica ranked 101st on the UN’s Human Development Index (United Nations 2007), comparable to Sri Lanka and Vietnam. In 2001, however, it had ranked 78th.and had been even higher in the 1990s.

¹² On the political and economic history of Jamaica after independence, see also Stephens and Stephens (1986).

¹³ Over the period 1972 to 1998, according to Freedom House measures of ‘political rights’, Jamaica averaged 1.82, comparable to Israel and Greece. Its performance on ‘civil liberties’ (2.59) is less stellar, but still similar to that of Spain. (On the relationship between such indices and growth, see Easterly, Ritzen, and Woolcock 2006.)

As we argue in detail below, it is our contention that the prevailing view of the structural conditions that make for violence does in fact explain the Jamaican anomaly quite well, but that many of the standard indicators used to measure the key variables are inadequate for capturing the context-specific form and function of social divisions and institutional quality in Jamaica. On the basis of our fieldwork, we will show that, official data notwithstanding, Jamaica is neither “cohesive” nor “democratic”, and that it is the interaction of these two factors that explains the prevalence of sustained violence while also offering some hopeful strategies for responding to it. The importance of understanding *how* social divisions and institutional weaknesses manifest themselves in the Jamaican context has important broader implications for attempts to identify single measures of “violence”, “institutions”, and “diversity” across vastly different national settings, and thereby to generate general theories. It is our view that cross-national quantitative studies and qualitative country case studies are necessary complements, and that in order to be able to provide specific advice to specific countries regarding specific issues, the insights of both approaches are needed (cf. Pritchett 2001).

III. Methodology and Methods

Our paper builds on four previous studies of common violence in Kingston (see Moser and Holland 1997, Duncan 2001, Rao and Ibañez 2005, Clarke 2006). These studies, especially Duncan (2001), suggest that initiatives generated in and through community-based organisations have assumed critical importance in helping rival communities attain something resembling a lasting peace. Using an Analytic Case Study¹⁴ methodology (see Ragin and Becker 1992; Merriam 1997; Van Evera 1997; Bennett and George 2005), Duncan (2001) undertook detailed fieldwork in two communities in Kingston Western: Trench Town and Jones Town.¹⁵ This research specifically focused on two districts in each community: Arnett Gardens and Rema (Trench Town); Jones Town and Craig Town (Jones Town).¹⁶ The aim of this initial analysis was to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of these districts and to develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and political processes.

¹⁴ Merriam (1997: 34) defines a qualitative case study as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit.

¹⁵ Most of these inner-city communities are known as ‘garrison communities’ as they are plagued by political tribalism. Border wars between these garrison communities has resulted in: increased difficulty in maintaining law and order; an inability to maintain social infrastructure which passes through disparate communities; a restriction of movement through these areas (which affects job attendance and access to other economic opportunities); and restriction of business opportunities to the localised area.

¹⁶ Note that the SDC delineates Trench Town as comprising of the districts Arnett Gardens, Rema, Rose Town and Lyndhurst-Greenwich; and Jones Town as comprising of the districts Craig Town, Jones Town and Admiral Town. The researcher due to time limitations focused on the districts delineated in the body of the analysis.

The early findings suggested that the reduction in violent crime has not been the result of a pure or orthodox peace process. Unexpectedly, the preliminary findings indicated that the recent reduction in violence could primarily be attributed to an orchestrated agreement between the two most powerful Dons in Kingston (and therefore, Jamaica): Christopher Dudus (Tivoli Gardens - JLP) and Donald Zeeks (Matthews Lane - PNP). These communities are in close proximity to the case sites under study. In fact, Rema was the original entry point for Tivoli Gardens' gangs to penetrate Arnett Gardens. The reasons for the successful negotiations are based on power, leverage and access. It was initiated around the renovation of the Kingston Public Hospital (KPH) in 1996¹⁷ and the necessary informal security contracts to allow the refurbishment to proceed smoothly.

The preliminary fieldwork yielded several insights, but also raised important questions for further research. As such, three particular lines of inquiry were pursued in the present study. First, given the nature of the early findings, the research communities for the present study were expanded to include two new communities, namely Tivoli Gardens and Matthew's Lane, within West Kingston.¹⁸ The project thus encompassed a total of eight districts/communities: in addition to above, we also studied Arnett Gardens and Rema (within Trench Town), Craig Town and Jones Town (within Jones Town), and Cockburn Gardens and Waterhouse (within Olympic Gardens). (See Table 1 for an overview of the characteristics of the research communities.) Second, careful attention was given to the selection of communities that were comparable in terms of demographic composition but which had either (a) not experienced high levels of violence or (b) had had less success quelling violence (Olympic Gardens fits these criteria). Without collecting data from these otherwise comparable communities, it is likely that our findings will suffer from a serious selection bias problem. Third, in addition to addressing these methodological concerns, we also explored in more detail the relationship between local community organisations, political processes, and common violence.

¹⁷ The JA\$739.8 million contract for redevelopment of the hospital was signed in 1997 and the work began that year.

¹⁸ West Kingston is the police demarcation for the area comprising of two political constituencies. Though Trench Town and Jones Town are actually in the electoral constituency of South St. Andrew, they border the political constituency of West Kingston. These two constituencies have historically been at war with each other.

Table 1 – Characteristics of Research Communities¹⁹

<i>Community</i>	<i>Trench Town</i>		<i>Jones Town</i>		<i>West Kingston</i>		<i>Olympic Gardens</i>	
<i>Sub-Case/District</i>	Arnett Gardens	Rema	Jones Town	Craig Town	Tivoli Gardens	Matthews Lane	Cockburn Gardens	Waterhouse
<i>Socio-economic Status</i>	Less Poor	Extremely Poor	Very Poor	Poor	Less Poor	Poor	Less Poor	Poor
<i>Intra-City Location</i>	Inner-city	Inner-city	Inner-city	Inner-city	Inner-city	Inner-city	Poor neighborhood	Poor neighborhood
<i>Socio-economic characteristics</i>	Deteriorating residential and business areas (fairly recent, 1980s)	Deteriorating residential (fairly recent, 1980s)	Deteriorating residential and business areas (1970s)	Deteriorating residential; cycles of destruction	Deteriorating mixed residential, near markets and factories	Deteriorating residential, including CBD with all major markets	Mixed residential, near factories	Deteriorating residential near factories
<i>Internal Spatial Division</i>	Bifurcated into upper and lower sections (then into different housing schemes)	Bifurcated by gully (Collie Smith Drive)	Bifurcated into upper and lower sections	Differentiated by socio-economic status	Closed community with community center in the middle	Bifurcated into upper and lower sections surrounding transportation and market hub	Differentiated by socio-economic status (some housing schemes)	Differentiated by socio-economic status
<i>Political Party Characteristics</i>	Garrison (PNP ¹ stronghold)	Garrison (traditionally JLP ² stronghold, recent)	Politically aligned community (PNP)	Contrasting political party alignment (often caught in warfare)	Garrison (JLP stronghold)	PNP stronghold	Politically aligned community (JLP)	Politically aligned community (PNP)

¹⁹ It is important to note that two successive Ministers of Housing of governments of different political parties represented the Trench Town community as MPs – Wilton Hill, JLP (1962-1972), Anthony Spaulding, PNP (1972-1980); the West Kingston community has been represented by Leader of the Opposition, Edward Seaga as MP for the past 40 years (1962-present).

		secession)		between PNP and JLP)				
<u>CBOs</u> ³	4 (Arnett Gdns Football Club, Arnett Gdns Community Dev. Committee, Future Youth for Social Change, Arnett Gardens Youth Club)	2 (Trench Town Development Assoc., Joy Town Learning Centre)	4 (Jones Town Area Council, Poyatt Street Police Youth Club, Youth for Progress, Silver Thread Endurance Senior Citizens)	2 (Craig Town Youth Organization, Craig Town Women's Group)	5 (Senior Citizens, Tivoli Gardens Drum Corps, Youth Club, Presidential Click)	1 (Heart of Kingston)	4 (Olympic Gardens Community Dev. Committee, Peace Accord Youth, Gold Star Youth Club, Teens in Action Club)	4 (St. Patrick's Drum Corps, Waterhouse United Youth Club, Lambs Pen United Youth Club)
Educational Institutions	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>	1 (remedial classes)	5	4	5	4

Source: Compiled from Social Development Commission's Community Profiles 1999/2000 and Integrated CBO Directory

1. PNP is the People's National Party
2. JLP is the Jamaica Labour Party
3. These are all the CBOs recorded for the respective districts in the SDC's CBO directory. Not all are actually in existence.

By building on the previous work directly and indirectly associated with our project, we developed a thoroughly grounded case study that draws on both qualitative (primary) and quantitative (secondary) evidence. Given the paucity of formal quantitative data currently available, however, and the limited resources available for this case study, the primary research was largely carried out using qualitative methods (focus groups, informant interviews, and participant observation). Where possible and appropriate, of course, every effort was made to incorporate quantitative data. Overall, the objective of this research project was to explore in detail the role of community organisations and political processes in the creation, perpetuation, and resolution of violent conflict in Kingston. It essentially updated and refined the original work of Moser and Holland (1997), with greater attention and sensitivity to case selection issues, and to accounting for the dramatic *fall* in, and subsequent resumption of, common violence that has occurred since that study was completed. Our research generated a greater understanding of the dynamics shaping the behaviour of individuals, communities, and political parties, and gives direction for the ways in which these actors, along with external agents, can assist in the process of reducing common violence.

The selected communities were chosen as matched case comparisons for the present study for the following reasons:

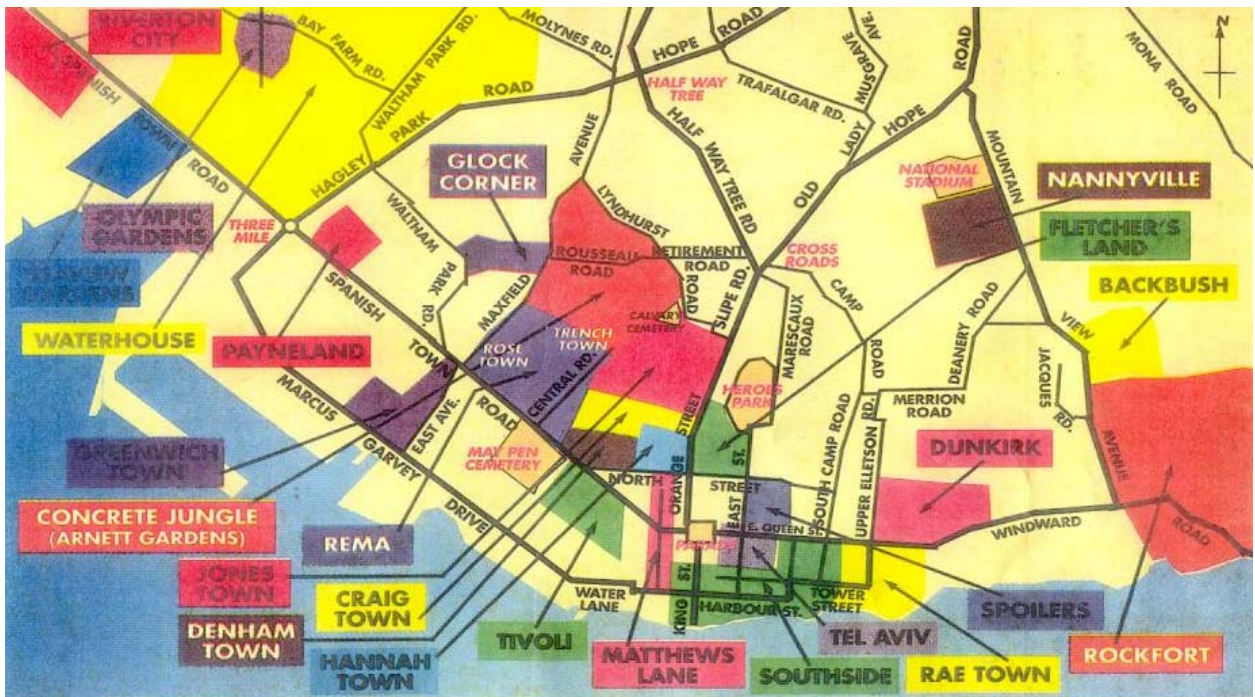
- Trench Town, Jones Town, and West Kingston communities were the site of dramatic reduction in homicides for the period 1995-2000
- Olympic Gardens community is similar demographically but was not successful in quelling violence for any sustained period during 1995-2001
- Accessibility of communities to the researchers, as these typically tend to be closed communities
- Rema and Arnett Gardens (in Trench Town) were the first war-ravaged communities to organize their own peace initiated by local-level community leadership in 1988.²⁰
- Tivoli Gardens and Matthews Lane (West Kingston) have maintained peace from 1995-present, while violence in all other communities has increased since April 2001

It is important to note that Arnett Gardens (PNP) and Rema (JLP) are historic political rivals and were a hotbed of tribal violence until the late 1980s. The communities are contiguous, but during the period of continuous war, an area—'No Man's Land'—developed and Collie

Smith Drive, which cuts right through the Trench Town community, came to be known as the “Gaza Strip” (see Figure 1 for a map). This violence was driven and resourced by the central communities in Matthews Lane (PNP) and Tivoli Gardens (JLP), which were controlled by leaders of the political parties. In the early 1990s, however, internal violence came to the fore: Arnett Gardens vs. Jones Town (both politically aligned with the PNP); and Rema vs. Tivoli (both politically aligned with the JLP).

²⁰ Carl Stone, “The Peace in Trench Town”, *The Daily Gleaner*, September 12, 1988.

Figure 1 – Map of Inner-city Kingston



Within the case study area, purposive sampling was conducted for each of the eight sub-cases. The criteria used for the initial sampling was the different constituents who exercise leadership in the communities, namely key decision makers who would affect the implementation of any given policy. Given the complexity and little-known information about the particular issue or area under study, snowball sampling was utilized. This strategy involved asking each participant or group of participants to refer the researcher to other participants. Initial access points were gained through Members of Parliament (MP) for the respective communities, Community Liaisons (born in the community), Social Development Commission community development officers, CBO leaders, and Community Dons.

Within the larger case site, comprising the four communities of Trench Town, Jones Town, West Kingston and Olympic Gardens, there were numerous sites visited, events or activities observed, people interviewed, documents reviewed. Some of these were:

- Tony Spaulding Sports Complex²¹
- Trench Town Culture Yard²²
- Craig Town Youth Organization
- Operation Restoration²³
- Tivoli Gardens Community Center with music recording studio
- Tivoli Gardens Sports Complex
- Waterhouse Football Team
- The Peace Center
- PALS (Peace and Love in Schools Initiative)

Forms of Data Collection

A wide range of tools was used during the research conducted for this project, including historical analysis, secondary social science and statistical data analysis, observation, interviewing and document analysis. In selecting a particular approach, the team reviewed the various options and considered factors such as how the study would be conducted, and who would use the data. Because there was so little recorded knowledge available to the researchers at the outset, it was determined that the first step should be a historical analysis. This enabled an understanding of key institutional issues, the dynamics of inter-group

²¹ The sports complex is named after the former MP for the area (1972-1980), Anthony Spaulding.

²² Trench Town Culture Yard focuses on promoting the cultural history of the Wailers, of which the legendary Bob Marley was a member.

²³ This is a school uniquely located in the empty land between Arnett Gardens and Rema, known ominously as No Man's Land.

relationships, political histories and manipulations, and the nature of transformations that local institutions and communities had experienced in the recent past. In keeping with this, a collection and review of all current and relevant documents—particularly by the Urban Development Corporation (UDC), Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), Ministry of National Security and Justice, University of the West Indies, and *The Daily Gleaner*—was conducted and set the basis for the following methods of data collection: participant observation, in-depth interviews, unstructured individual discussions, and focus groups.

Photographic records were also extremely useful. The researchers were asked to photograph as much as possible in the communities, which helped the entire research team visualize the setting if they were unable to be there themselves, and aided in bringing the communities to life when doing the data analysis. In combination, situated, semi-structured, emergent data gathering allowed for the discovery and exploration of context-relevant findings.

Research Procedures

Field research for this study was conducted in two phases. The first phase focused on the communities of Trench Town and Jones Town, while the second focused on West Kingston, Olympic Gardens and revisits to both Trench Town and Jones Town. This is a limitation, as it did not allow us to take into account the variation in seasonal changes in the communities (Easter Break, Back-to-School activities, Christmas Holiday), nor the variation over consecutive time periods for consistency.

The research team comprised eight members: three women and five men, from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. This was important as it sensitized all members to issues pertaining to context and perception, and enabled them to conduct the research in a more effective manner. Five of the researchers were from the inner-city communities themselves; all had completed some form of tertiary education, and were trained by one of us (Duncan) in the use of qualitative methods. Their background was a major advantage because they could slip into the communities and engage people in casual conversations in a variety of settings in ways that “outsiders” never could.

Careful systematic observation was initially conducted to get a sense of the lay of the land of each community. These communities are particularly suitable for observation, as people

conduct their daily activities outside given the space constraints in their houses.²⁴ Observations were made pertaining to the physical setting, the community's members (i.e., how many people, their roles, distinguishing characteristics, power dynamics, etc), their activities, interactions, and conversations. Participant observation was also utilized as it taught the researchers to appreciate the details of their communities, the processes by which they are created and sustained, and the ways people survive in order to carry out their economic activities, which in turn facilitates deeper and more careful analysis of data.

In-depth interviews were conducted with representatives from the community—the MP, CBO leaders and members, Community Dons, community members, School Principals, police, students, football team members²⁵. The total number of interviews conducted was 108. Of this number, 28 were CBO leaders, and 6 were school principals (Basic School, and High School). It is important to note that each round of interviews was adjusted based on what was learnt in the previous round as well as learning through observation. Flexibility in the field was a key to success in this research project.

Focus groups of varying composition were also conducted. This method was employed because the interaction within groups in the districts was vital to assessing the nature and extent of social relations within the communities. Interaction between groups in the different districts was also desired but was not possible given time constraints. Focus groups comprised 5 to 9 individuals. The focus groups were held in all communities and included, among others, children (7-14); young men and women; gang members; women of mixed age and responsibility in the community. The total number of focus groups conducted was 12. It must be noted that each stage of data collection was highly interactive and iterative, as ongoing analysis continually informed the data collection. Emerging insights, hunches and tentative hypothesis directed each subsequent phase of data collection, which in turn lead to the refinement or reformulation of questions. Questions were open-ended to gain as much unconstrained local knowledge as possible. As the project dealt with data about people's experiences and perceptions, we utilized the software N5 to assist in the analysis. The software was used to search the text and code the data, so as to determine patterns, locate themes, test theories and generate new ideas and concepts.

IV. Results: Jamaican Democracy and Violence in Context

²⁴ However, timing was an issue, as the community did not really come alive until 2pm. Those that worked left early in the morning, and those that did not stayed up late at night protecting the community or socializing, and thus arose in the early afternoon.

The most popular approach to understanding democracy among contemporary Caribbean social scientists is the Schumpeterian approach, which sees contestation and participation as the central denotative features of democracy. According to Edie (1994: 3), for example, democracy is “a system of government in which there is meaningful and extensive political competition for positions of government power, at regular intervals, among individuals and organized groups, especially political parties.” The Schumpeterian approach sees democracy as essentially electoral democracy, or procedural democracy. Elections are indeed a critical legitimizing mechanism for democracies, and hence they are a requirement of democracy, and they must be free and fair. However, a democracy requires not only free and fair elections with the results accepted by the various constituencies in the society, but also the exercise more generally of civil and political rights unencumbered by the instruments of state coercion (Griffith and Sedoc-Dahlberg 1997: 3).

Nevertheless, despite these deep roots, during the 1990s and 2000s the gradual weakening of both the foundations and the structures of Jamaican democratic governance has become increasingly evident. Over the last thirty years, according to the World Bank’s CPIA measures and governance indicators²⁶, Jamaica’s institutional performance has fallen both absolutely and relative to the rest of the Latin America and Caribbean region (see Figure 2). Jamaica’s score on the index of democracy has fallen²⁷, and government’s effectiveness at delivering basic services has declined to the point where Jamaica’s ranking on the UNDP’s Human Development Index slipped fifteen places during the 1990s (United Nations, 1992; 2001; 2003)²⁸. According to the six aggregate measures of “governance” compiled by Kaufman, Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2007) for the period 1996-2006, Jamaica’s standing, relative to its Caribbean neighbors, has been consistently low and in some cases widening (see Figure 3).²⁹ In 1998, Jamaica’s “Regulatory Quality” was comparable to Belgium, and better than France, Iceland, Italy, and Malaysia; by 2001 it had fallen to the level of Zambia,

²⁵ Football is currently the ‘new’ vehicle for community development. Indeed it is commonly felt that the initial reduction in violence was due to the utilization of sports to bring communities together.

²⁶ The World Bank compiled CPIA (country performance and institutional assessment) data from 1977 until the mid-1990s, but it was only ever intended as a proximate guide. The Bank now draws upon a much richer, diverse and higher quality set of indicators, made manifest in the “governance indicators” compiled by Daniel Kaufman, Aart Kraay, and their collaborators. To get a general sense of the trends, we present the CPIA data from 1977-96, and then (more formally) the governance indicators (from Kaufman, Kraay and Mastruzzi 2007) for the most recent period.

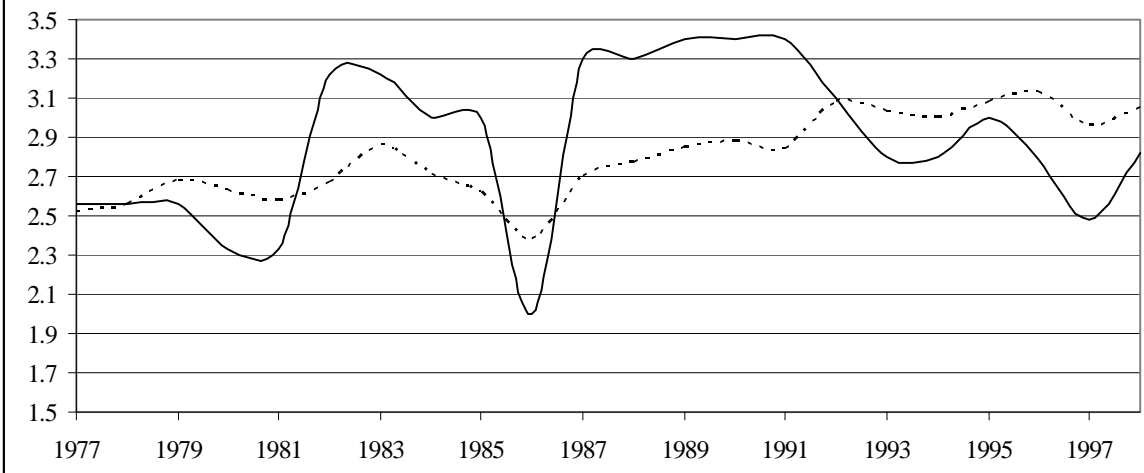
²⁷ See Van Hannen (1997).

²⁸ In fairness, Barbados and Trinidad—the only other Caribbean countries on which HDI data is available—also fell a comparable distance in the rankings during this period, suggesting Jamaica’s problems are not entirely its own. However, between 2001 and 2003 Jamaica’s decline in ranking was sharper than Barbados and Trinidad’s, and Jamaica has only continued to decline on the HDI rankings in the following years (as noted above).

²⁹ In spite of these weak governance indicators, Jamaica has been able to sustain relatively high levels of foreign direct investment (FDI) since the mid-1990s. Most of this investment, however, supports “enclave development” in resorts and mines, the security of which (physically and legally) can be assured by private security forces. FDI averaged US\$520 million for the period 1999-2003 (UNCTAD 2004); in 2006 the net inflow of FDI was over \$800 million (World Bank 2008).

whose GDP/c, at \$750, was less than a quarter of Jamaica's (\$3500). In 2001, Jamaica had a "Rule of Law" rating comparable to that of Malawi (GDP/c of \$600) and Sierra Leone (\$450), even as it climbed in the international rankings from 125th to 95th. Deemed a country with moderate "political stability" in 1996, by 2006 Jamaica was ranked at the same level as Niger and Turkmenistan. By any measure, the unmistakable conclusion is that Jamaica's governance scores on key dimensions thought to be crucial for economic growth have declined well below those of countries with similar levels of development, and its immediate Caribbean neighbours. Indeed, when one examines Jamaica's unflattering and unstable growth trajectory over the past fifty years, and especially the last thirty years (see Figure 4), the evidence is clear that both its economy and society are presided over by a state with less than stellar institutional underpinnings.

Figure 2: Institutional Performance in Jamaica and the Caribbean, 1977-1998

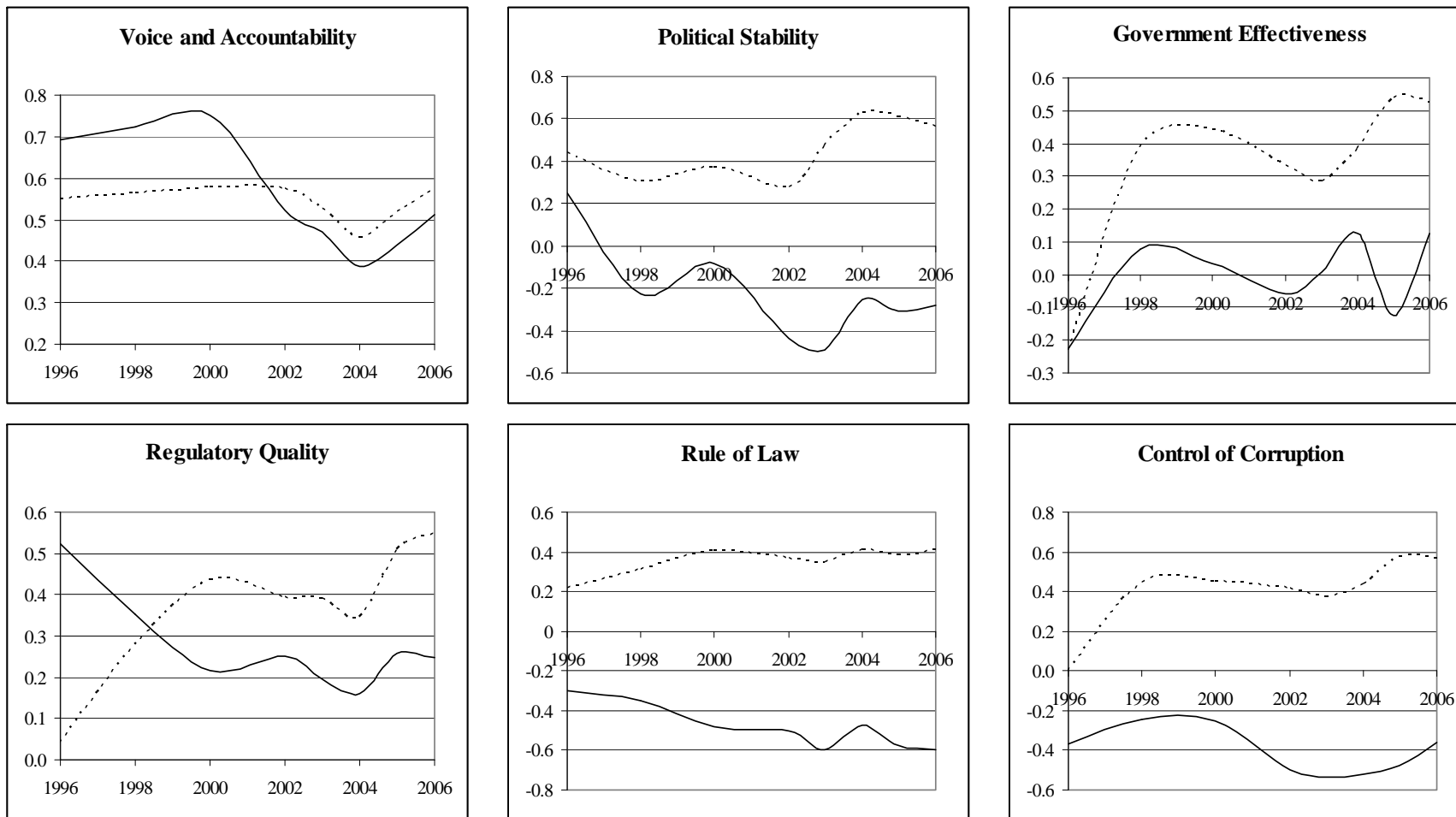


Jamaica ——— Caribbean Average - - - - -

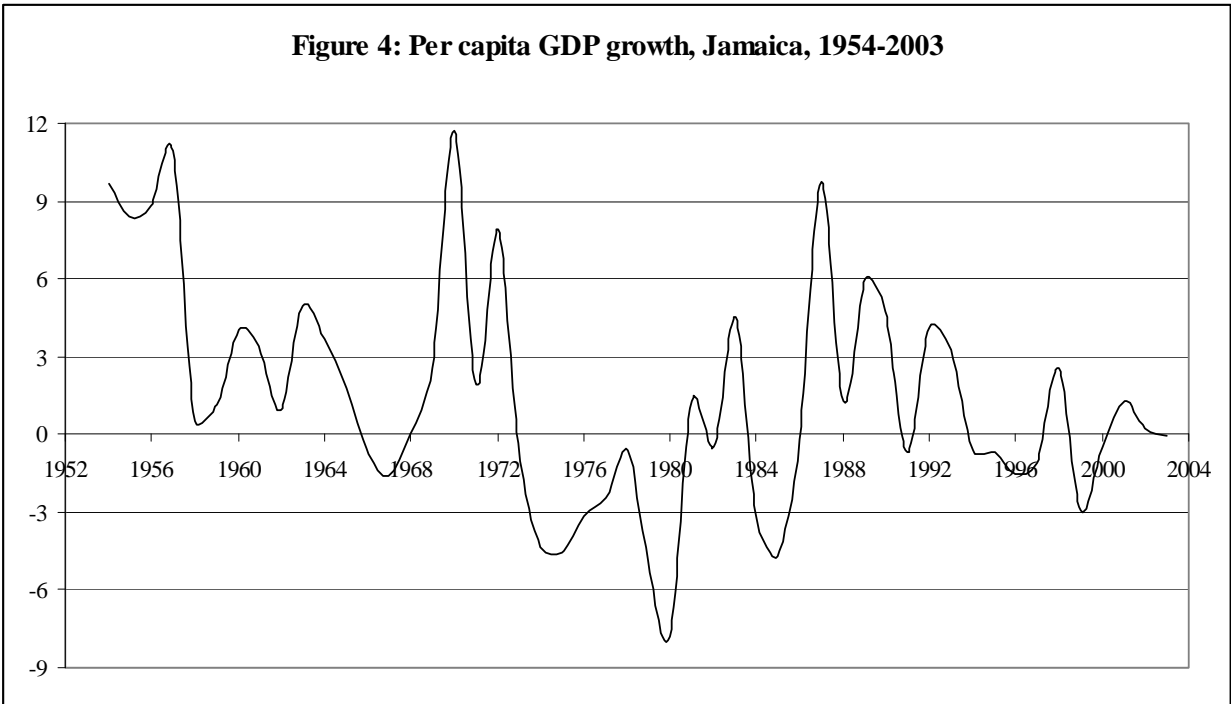
Source: Authors' calculations

Figure 3: Governance Indicators for Jamaica and the Caribbean, 1996-2006

Jamaica ——— Caribbean Average (N=23) - - - - -



Source: Adapted from Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2007)



Source: Heston, Summers and Aten (2006)

However, in the face of this otherwise unhappy profile, Jamaica has consistently compared favorably to other countries in relation to the governance indicator of “voice and accountability” (see Figure 3). This indicator is of particular importance to the extent that it facilitates the type of engagement that this analysis explores. In this context, consolidating and strengthening voice, accountability and participation is a major condition for the renewal of Jamaican democracy and the enhancement of its governmental effectiveness. It is to a more grounded analysis of these conditions that we now turn.

Grounds for Peace

In-depth interviews with community members, political leaders, CBO leaders, business people, gang members and Dons reveal that the dramatic reduction in violent crimes in Kingston West that began in 1997 was a result of a negotiated peace process. Importantly, mechanisms were developed at the community level to enforce the peace. Many former warring communities now have informal mechanisms for dealing with threats to the peace, and a process for dealing with inter-community disputes³⁰. Given the recent breakdown, the peace was indeed shown to be fragile, and may even be better characterized as a truce rather than a peace. Today, only two of the original communities have maintained the agreement. This begs the question: why did the peace/truce come about and how is it maintained between the central communities of Matthew’s Lane and Tivoli Gardens? Answering these questions provides insight as to the possibilities of progressing from a fragile truce to a sustainable peace.

There was a time when they stopped the gun thing. After the Rema war and the peace was formed, you could go anywhere. You could walk through Matthew’s Lane, you could go up through Hannah Town, come through Arnett Gardens. I remember for twenty-four years, twenty-five years Tivoli Gardens couldn’t go into Rema, not even to play football, and after the peace, everybody come together and everybody start feel comfortable. People could walk on Collie Smith Drive straight up into Arnett Gardens and feel comfortable.

Luke, a man in his late 30’s who lives in Tivoli.

Twenty-five years of politically motivated war was powerfully negotiated during a period of three years. As stated, the reduction in violence can primarily be attributed to an orchestrated agreement between the Dons—Dudus (Tivoli Gardens - JLP) and Zeeks (Matthew’s Lane - PNP). The agreement was consolidated around the renovation of the

³⁰ Maintenance of peace has been facilitated by the increase of cellular phones in the community. Community Dons are able to communicate with other and solve transgressions much more quickly before a potentially combative situation becomes heated.

Kingston Public Hospital (KPH) in 1996,³¹ but a series of interviews indicate that talks were initiated before this.

When interviewed, Edward Seaga (MP for Western Kingston, and builder of the garrison constituency Tivoli Gardens) claimed significant responsibility for this reduction in violent crime. “The peace was initiated during talks between Clinton Davy³² (former PNP representative in Western Kingston) and myself in 1994”, he said. Similar sentiments were also expressed by the present PNP caretaker who participated in the roundtable talks at the time, but as he says, “Politically it was Clinton and Seaga and some others including myself... but the truth of the matter you know, is that the peace couldn’t hold without the support of Zeeks and Duddus, you understand.” While these efforts did facilitate the process towards peace, neither our field research nor the crime and violence data indicate that this was a determining factor. Indeed, politicians no longer had the power to initiate such a peace initiative. As a result of the drug economy, the gunmen were now financially independent and no longer held to task by the politicians.

The head of the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce (JCC) indicated that talks began when they set up the Inner City Development Committee (ICDC). According to Mr. Lalor, “the organisation was formed in 1993; that was a special year. It was really because of the war between Matthew’s Lane and Tivoli Gardens. The President at the time saw it fit to have a meeting where a representative from Tivoli, one from Matthew’s Lane, and one from each community—Waterhouse, Dunkirk, Rockfort, Bull Bay, you name it, Arnett Gardens—all Inner City communities were present. They sat down and they met and they discussed problems... These people were taken through this program—[the] Inner City Leadership Training Program—out of which came the bond where they found that we *can* work together, and if we *can* work together here, we have to take it back into our communities.” The Jamaica Chamber of Commerce is located in the heart of the Central Business District and thus had every motive to act as a facilitator. This began the process of the conversation.

It is in fact quite remarkable that the JCC could bring these players to the table while Tivoli (JLP) was warring with both Matthew’s Lane (PNP) and Rema (JLP). Timing was vital. “People tired” were sentiments repeatedly expressed across the communities of Rema, Matthew’s Lane, Tivoli, and Arnett Gardens when speaking about the 1980s into the 1990s; people were tired after 25 years of constant violence. A primary school teacher who was a

³¹ The JA\$739.8 million contract for redevelopment of the hospital was signed in 1997 and the work began in that year.

³² Clinton Davy, also known as Jingles.

Don in Rema during the mid 1990s profoundly captures the story of Rema in the middle 1970s to mid 1990s:

Let me tell you about the 'Rema Massacre,' May 8, 1984. That night was a curfew. The men from Tivoli set a curfew and did a house-to-house search, killed two men in the evening and six men in the night. Our leader (Seaga), because Rema was hardcore JLP, came up to Hugh Sherlock School in the community and said Jim Brown was still the don, although Jim Brown come massacre eight people. Can you imagine how we felt? Everybody knew that Rema was JLP, because it was ten years that we and Arnett Gardens was fighting through political friction.

All those things caused one heap of problems. For ten years Tivoli ran Rema, ten years, and based on what they did in those ten years, even a Christian would fight them. They raped your sister, they killed your brother, they come up and beat you, if you were hosting a dance, they come and drink out your liquor and not pay you, they fire shots in the air, as you slip they kill you, you can't do anything. So it's like a vengeance building up. The ten years of ruling us caused the four years of war that started in 1994 and went until 1998. It went until they said peace, and the peace went for three years...

I saw how much youth they killed in Rema. You remember we had a crew in a Rema named the 'Fatherless Crew'. The Fatherless Crew you know, was all made up of men whose fathers were killed by men from Tivoli Gardens. So all of them turned into gunmen to try defend their father's honor. All of those youth grew with hatred in their heart for Garden men. The sad thing is that most of their fathers died as casualties of the political wars of the 1970's as Tivoli wanted to maintain Rema on their side – their cover to enter Arnett Gardens.

This story is emblematic of the impact that political violence has on creating the seeds for common violence, in this case reprisal killings. On exploring the level of murders in these communities it was astonishing to learn the motivations: vengeance held for 8 years, in some cases up to 12 years at a time. The police recording for this data was simply 'homicide, by firearm'. The root cause was often not probed, and a chance to get at the base was missed.

Indeed, the Dons, politicians and CBO leaders are very much aware of this primary motive and have often averted a series of murders by convening the parties almost immediately after the first reprisal victim falls to the gun. One of the political organizers in Tivoli tells of the last time the peace was broken: "... [I]t was broken because a man across another community shot Dudus' brother. We were paged on our beeper about it and a man was killed in retaliation. They never wanted to call it quits. But it ended when the Dons met and negotiated a thing and it finished." Twenty-five years later, peace could be negotiated, as the main proponents had equal and independent bargaining power. The basis for the agreement to peace, or more appropriately, strategic alliances, was that Zeeks controlled the area

bordering KPH, which represents access to the greater part of Kingston and therefore jobs, and Dudus controlled the wharf (Tivoli is right by the sea), which provides access to drugs and guns transported via the sea. This all rested on the fact that during peace there is an easier flow of drugs and arms (since less police are on patrol), and that both men had begun to invest in legal entities in greater Kingston. They could clearly connect with interests of the business community as represented by the JCC. Politicians no longer had the power to initiate or consolidate; instead they saw the opportunity and followed the general trend. However, it must be noted that they have the capacity to thwart the efforts of maintaining peace.

As argued above, in the first full year of the peace, 1998, there was a sharp reduction in the number of murders in Kingston Western and stability in the following year.¹⁷ By 1999, as the peace movement spread to other communities in and beyond West Kingston, the decline in the number of homicides had become more generalized. Essentially, this agreement was extended to other Dons in surrounding communities. These Dons actively maintained peace, and anyone who stepped out of line was reprimanded through “Jungle Justice”, an issue to which we now turn.

‘Jungle Justice’: Informal/Traditional Peacekeeping Efforts

The parallel justice system in Kingston is known as Jungle Justice or Fowl Coop Justice. This informal court system has developed over the past 40 years in such a way that Community Dons work together to maintain order. These courts investigate crime carefully and regard themselves as “protectors of the community”; they even post “codes of ethics”³³ on street corners. The Community Codes of Matthew’s Lane and Tivoli Gardens were explicitly displayed, understood, and adhered to by all the communities under study. A focus group of some young boys in a political stronghold told of their punishments of kneeling on bottle caps, or standing with one hand on your head and one holding your foot in a public place. When asked if such things were true, a focus group of elderly in the community substantiated it, saying that the children would learn early the importance of abiding by the code.

In the communities, “courts” are presided over by one overarching Community Don and six or seven elderly followers. These courts deal with discipline issues such as ignoring or disrespecting the Don’s commands and orders. These “courts” carry out the punishment

³³ These codes of ethics include edicts such as ‘no stealing within the community, must respect age, all children should go to school, no raping, keep community clean’.

system of beatings and knee-capping established in the Kangaroo Courts of the 1960s. These 'crimes'—as well as robbery, rape, diverting drugs/guns/money for personal use—are punishable by death, or where leniency prevails, shooting in the foot. Generally, all types of offenders are locked in a fowl coop or very small room, provided water and crackers for several days until punishment is arranged.

The parallel justice system has developed for a number of reasons.³⁴

- *Police are unable to respond quickly or effectively*

Communities are frustrated because it is extremely difficult to call the police (police telephone lines always busy or not answered) to deal with the incidence of crime. If the police are contacted they may not be able to respond quickly because of lack of transport, insufficient staff, high demand for assistance, reluctance to come to the area (e.g., fear of ambush or reprisal), or failure to recognize the seriousness of the call.

- *Lack of confidentiality*

Eyewitnesses fear that by reporting the crime they will be recognized as an informer or accused of disrespecting the Don. The high incidence of corrupt police with economic linkages to criminal elements means that the information provided by eyewitnesses will easily filter back.

- *Time to expedite justice*

The severe backlog in the courts and the time to accumulate evidence and prepare court cases (often years) leads to citizens being disillusioned with the official justice system.

- *Non-standardization of punishments*

The Chief Justice noted in 1998 that the justice system punishes the person not the offence. The communities have reiterated that who you are and who you know are both important factors in influencing the nature of the punishment. This also leads to dissatisfaction with the system.

- *Reliance on eye witness accounts*

As police do not necessarily know the communities in which they operate very well, they have to rely on descriptions of criminal acts and the perpetrators. Community members do not give very accurate descriptions (out of fear of retaliation, inability to describe facial characteristics, or deliberate misinformation).

When the community persons were asked who they would go to if they had witnessed a crime, nearly all indicated that they would go to the Don because he would know the perpetrators and could conduct a swift assessment of the situation and mete out immediate justice. Currently, this informal system is so well entrenched that these Dons often work in

collaboration with the police (unlike earlier times). The police request the Don to intervene to prevent small gang feuds, petty theft, and shop breaking. Police will also refer criminals to the Fowl Coop system so that immediate action can be taken and the community tensions arising from the incident can be calmed to prevent further trouble. Dons are regarded as effective mediators in quarrels and are a calming influence on aggressors. Where aggressors ignore these warnings they are 'asked' (forced) to move out of the community. Many Dons nowadays arrange a number of welfare programs such as the provision of schoolbooks, lunch money and feeding programs for the elderly. They have earned further respect through this.

This strong system of 'local leadership' accounts for the difference in levels and types of violence experienced in West Kingston versus Olympic Gardens. Indeed, members of the former community recognize and value such leadership even though it comes at a cost. According to a young woman living in a stronghold in West Kingston, "There is a difference in a community that has one leader... Things are more structured and accountability plays a vital role, so there can be no turf war, no corner war, no man and man war. This is possible because we follow the rules, we have a code." On the other hand, Barry from Cockburn Gardens clearly states that, "There is no one-Don for this community. Every street has a different leader; it's a lot of aspiring Dons. That's why we have flare ups all the time. But nobody really run this area... Many of these guys go to foreign [countries] and get rich and promote disrespect in the place. They are having power struggles, and they have ego problems. They are profiling on one another and it cause friction, so they have to fly out and send guns for their 'corner' so when he comes back you have to know how to talk to him or you have to become his friend. There are so many guns around here!"

By no means are we justifying or romanticizing Jungle Justice or the seeds of this peace process. Although there was an observed code of silence around the issue of the community code, a few women in particular made reference to having to send their daughters to the Don whenever he made a 'request'. Rather, we hope to highlight the features and the needs satisfied by the informal system as signals of the failure of formal institutions. In such a situation, strong concentrated leadership can facilitate a consistent base of peace on which many positive activities can flourish. Indeed, communities have begun to rebuild: war torn zones once again have access to public transportation, micro enterprises are flourishing,³⁵

³⁴ These findings are based on results from discussions with five Community Dons, their 'employees' (shottas and fryers), community persons (including youth and school children) and a past area leader, now a councillor.

³⁵ Though these businesses are providing a source of income, it is essentially a situation of the poor buying from the poor, which is not very sustainable.

and community groups are growing and addressing community needs such as parenting skills, after-school programs, football clubs and the like.

Responses by Community-Based Organisations (CBOs)

Though we interviewed many CBO leaders and members, the story of Craig Town Youth Organization was particularly poignant, given the impact they had had on their community and members in addressing common violence.

Craig Town Youth Organization

Craig Town is a small community that is rimmed by Rema, Jones Town, Denham Town and Hannah Town, all inner-city areas with a history of political violence. The location of Craig Town played a key role in the creating the necessary conditions that led to the creation of the Craig Town Youth Organization (CTYO). Craig Town was caught in the middle of politically warring communities (Tivoli Gardens and Arnett Gardens) and thus developed a variety of defense mechanisms in order to survive. A particularly brutal conflict led to the creation of CTYO, a conflict which saw four people killed in one night, including two women who suffered over 30 bullets each, and a 5 month old baby. Out of this last crime was born the CTYO in 1989 “to organize for better community.”

Their first meeting had just over 100 attendees, including gunmen. They sought the assistance of the then MP³⁶. “He was surprised at our ability to mobilize”, recounts Maureen³⁷, a founding member, but nevertheless presented them with a building in the community that they could use as their clubhouse. The building was derelict and filled with bags of feces (there is a chronic sanitation problem in Craig Town), but, she says, “we cleaned the building, and met under the stars – the building never had a roof.” Hurricane Gilbert provided the members of the CTYO with the opportunity to access the newly available zinc to cover their roof. They organized a letter and petitioned for their share of the zinc and received it. (They had to be persistent though, over many months, to force the Community Don, at the behest of the MP, to drop off their petitioned allocation.) Their entrepreneurial spirit led them to sell the zinc to buy board for the roof, and as such they had a remaining sum of JA\$1500. They decided to use the remaining funds to host the first ‘Ghetto Splash’.

³⁶ The MP was Arthur (‘Bobby’) Jones, PNP.

³⁷ For purposes of privacy and confidentiality, we use the pseudonym ‘Maureen’.

In such a situation, political groups who noted CTYO's increasing strength attempted to sabotage their efforts to organize Ghetto Splash³⁸. They built two boulders to block the venue, which was in the center of the community, the day before the scheduled event. The leadership of CTYO decided they would not move the obstacles themselves; if the people of Craig Town wanted the show they would remove the obstacles. And so they did; participation generated ownership. Ghetto Splash was a success; with the community on their side, CTYO then organized to address the sanitation situation. They marched to the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation (JBC)³⁹ to make known their demands for support in building communal bathrooms for the Ghetto Splash venue. Their message was heard, materials were provided, and community members were integral in the actual building of the facilities itself.

Despite this promising start, however, CTYO lay dormant during 1994-1997 as the violence flared up again. With the new infusion of capital from Shocking Vibes (one of Jamaica's premier recording studios), CTYO organized to host Ghetto Splash in a more central location in order to address the violence by bringing people together in 1997. It is important to note that the CEO of Shocking Vibes was born and raised in Craig Town. Beenie Man⁴⁰, lead artist for Shocking Vibes, and nationally celebrated, assisted the members of the CTYO in talking to different Community Dons and residents to convince them that they all stood to benefit from this concert and thus should support it. The event was also a success. Soon thereafter, CTYO joined forces with the Jones Town Area Council (JTAC), which was spearheaded by the Kingston Restoration Company (KRC). Together they facilitated Summer Camp in 1998. At the same time, the leaders of CTYO and KRC arranged for classes to be taught by University professors at JTAC.

CARE and CARESS

One night as these JTAC classes were in session, a man (criminal) approached Maureen and informed her that he wanted to learn how to read but was afraid of the potential embarrassment of others if the community found out. This need became pressing for him as he was recently tricked by the police, where he signed a paper that led to him having to turn over some stolen goods and incriminate himself. Maureen was not too concerned with the needs of this man as she was busy with someone else and thus spoke only briefly to him about the benefits of reading. The man contemplated for 30 minutes and then said to her that the benefits outweighed the social costs: could they start that night? She distractedly said yes and the man rushed out. After classes at JTAC, she was walking towards Craig Town when about 30 men

³⁸ Ghetto Splash is a concert featuring national and internal reggae stars that is held in the inner-city.

³⁹ JBC was the only television station at the time. There now exists CVM as well. Also, the ownership of JBC has been transferred and the name is now TVJ.

⁴⁰ Beenie Man recently won the Grammy Award for the reggae section.

with pens and notebooks descended on her, claiming that they understood that she was going to teach them how to read.

Thinking quickly on her feet, she led them to the CTYO clubroom and nervously thought of a way to get started (she was not a teacher). “All I could come up with was the ‘name game’. I wrote my name on the blackboard and then told them that they were all going to write their names, using a letter from a previous name.” She told them not to worry, although there would be difficulty, we would all help each other along. And so it continued, until the blackboard was a collage of names. She then asked them what it meant to them, what did they see on the board? The responses were incredible: philosophical; it shows connections, how we are all interdependent.

Box 1: Members of the Area Youth Foundation

Murcott is 20 yrs old and lives in Trenchtown. “I have four brothers and three sisters... [I]n 1996 one of my brothers was shot by gunmen in Trenchtown at a dance; he was in his mid-20s. A bullet went through another person's head and lodged in my brother's.... I did pick up the gun yes, to avenge my brother... but I put it down when I joined AYF 3 years ago. I lay my brother to rest, leave it to time.” Murcott has to be careful when he goes home – if the AYF driver lets him off at Spanish Town road he has to run into Trench Town quickly. This is because “I once carried the gun and the people may know me and want to take me out.”

Marla is 18 yrs old and lives in West Kingston. “I have six O-levels, and I’m trying to get two more so that I can enter pharmaceutical school. Now I’m just doing AYF and looking for a part-time job while I study for the two subjects. It’s hard though as there are gun shots almost every night.” Marla has been a member of AYF for four years. “It’s given me a second chance at childhood, because you know in the inner-city you grow up fast – with AYF you have fun and explore things.”

There was incredible energy in the classroom. However, knowing that she lacked the necessary skills to teach the varied levels in that room, they agreed that if she could find someone to teach them, they would trust her judgment. Her conditions were that if they wanted classes, there had to be some rules. They generated the rules that night, e.g. class would be held every other day from 8-10pm (just before they had to go out and protect the community). The CTYO leader recruited the assistance of university professors to help teach, and thus CARE (Community Adult Remedial Education) was born. CARESS (Children At risk Educational Support Services) was modeled off of the YESS (Youth Educational Support Services) program that is facilitated by KRC in a different area of downtown Kingston. The

remaining projects, facilitated by CTYO and sponsored by the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF),⁴¹ are income generating: the Urban Farm and the Block Factory.

Area Youth Foundation

Area Youth Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan organisation that aims to impart social and life skills to urban youth training through arts based educational programming. It aims at effecting attitudinal and behavioral change through skills enhancement and opportunities for employment. The current members are approximately 50 inner city youth aged 14-26. Most are high school drop-outs. According to Sheila Graham, one of the founders, “The project has no end date; it’s a case of seeing where it goes. This is part of what has made it sustainable so far – because it has no premeditated blueprint, no particular deliverables or time frame and has been a case of almost making it up as we go along, this fluidity and flexibility has enabled its survival. Ironically, this has led to problems with funding agencies who like deliverables.” Trainers are paid a stipend and the AYF members are also paid for performances.

The violence directly affects the crew members because, given where they live, getting to and from the AYF practice/meeting site takes a long time; and the later practices (performances) end, the more difficult it is for the crew members to get home. “We rent buses to do that but the buses sometimes will only drop the crew members off at Spanish Town Road, refusing to enter inner city areas. We need our own bus and driver but can’t afford it.” When the field researchers asked Sheila when the worst spate of violence was, she pointed to “1997, when the little boy and the women were shot in Tivoli. We used that as a spark for the project – because that’s the year we started and we held information sessions at Tivoli High School. We used those events to say – ‘See, there is a real need for this type of program’.”

After that there was a real détente—a time of peace when things flowed well—but then came April of 2001, and things started to fall apart.

Things fall apart

What transpired after April 6, 2001, speaks to the manipulative forces of the political parties. Playing on the tribal identities of communities, rumors ran wild that this assassination was politically motivated. Reflecting on this, Mrs. Smith of the PNP stronghold in West Kingston recalled that “[i]n the early 1970s, politics played a more integral role than in this type of violence, you know. But now I think it is pure allegiance – you know you come from this side of the community. This side is PNP, that side is JLP, and nobody have to give any

⁴¹ JSIF is a poverty alleviation fund sponsored by the World Bank, IDB, and the Government of Jamaica.

instructions or say anything to them. Them just draw the line and you know you stay there and I stay here. It's hardwired in our brains now." Says Lucas, an elderly man living in Tivoli Gardens, "When the peace was broken we only heard that men coming from that side and they said that they (Arnett Gardens) wanted twenty men from down our end dead for the death of Willy Haggarth. We ignored that threat because we felt that it was word of mouth until they started to coming in and began killing men and so on. We couldn't tell if the men came from Arnett Garden, but we know that they came from up that side, through Jones Town and Rema coming down."

Few internal PNP informants speak openly of the real cause of the assassination and did not want to be quoted. However, the sentiments are articulated well by Jimmy, who owns a bar in a PNP stronghold:

From when Haggarth got killed, they said that the car that the killers were in was from Tivoli, but I got to understand that is not really Tivoli men that did it. But that started the whole thing, that put it in a political story, making it look like is a political thing, but from what I gather underneath, is that they did have Tony Welch, long time PNP Arnett Gardens Don from in the 1970s come back, and Haggarth was occupying his post, so him do a thing and get out Haggarth. Plenty people is terming it political... It's easy now, election coming up... People are getting frustrated, upset, no money circulating properly, nobody not getting any money. Money is kind of very scarce in Jamaica, so every little thing makes people flare up.

In sum, the community of Matthew's Lane has been resistant to prompting from PNP party activists to attack Tivoli. Indeed, their economic independence (albeit illegitimate) allows them that freedom. The peace agreement between Tivoli Gardens and Matthew's Lane still stands. Their community members are relatively thriving in the safe space they have maintained.

V. Discussion and Implications

Understanding violence in Jamaica presents scholars and policymakers alike with a unique set of challenges and opportunities. Challenges, because prevailing theories struggle to explain how a politically democratic and socially homogenous society with relatively modest levels of poverty and inequality can be among the most violent countries in the world; opportunities, because various promising initiatives by civil society organisations seem to offer some hope that context-specific responses by citizens can make a difference in terms of stemming the violence.

In this paper, we have sought to show that violence in Jamaica is different in important ways from its manifestation in other parts of the world. It may be tempting, for example, to see Kingston's violence as a mere variation on the gang-related crime associated with the American urban underclass, or to see in it shades of Africa's resource-fueled inter-group conflict, or Latin America's drug wars. There are similarities and overlaps, to be sure, but we argue that the Jamaican case is qualitatively unique, in that its origins and persistence lie squarely in Jamaica's distinctive *democratic* politics. Competing groups in Jamaica are killing one another for control of the state, and with it its corresponding prestige, patronage, and power; as economic opportunities have declined in the private sector over the last decade, the stakes for control of the public sector have only intensified. Unlike elsewhere, Jamaica's violence is not driven by disaffected "rebel groups", disenfranchised "minority groups", or disillusioned "civic groups" seeking to topple an autocratic or illegitimate regime using, terrorism, extortion, strikes, civil disobedience or the military. Rather, the two major political parties are locked in a deadly domestic war of attrition, in which each side viciously competes for and/or coerces the loyalty of distinctive territories and their voters in order to then "win" a "free and fair" election. Amazingly (and significantly), both parties espouse the lofty principles of liberty and freedom throughout this process, appropriating democratic discourse and upholding (more or less) orderly procedures even in defeat that have ensured multiple peaceful transitions of power over the past fifty years. Importantly, citizens deeply troubled by the ongoing and escalating violence have been able to call upon these same democratic institutional spaces to assert and insert their demands for reform.

In attempting to account for this state of affairs, we have sought to trace the political origins and socio-economic foundations of violence in contemporary Jamaica. We have argued that aggregate statistics identifying Jamaica as a demographically cohesive and well-governed society are in many respects deceiving, and that closer inspection reveals Jamaica to be in fact neither of these things. Jamaica's cadre of political elites are driven by a pathological desire for control of the state and its various accoutrements, but provide its everyday citizens with substandard and inadequate public services, most conspicuously education and basic justice, and for most of the last decade have presided over an unstable and sluggishly growing national economy. As such, they find in Kingston's burgeoning urban population a large, frustrated, and under-skilled cohort of young men ripe for recruitment into a deadly but lucrative nexus of political machines, organized crime gangs, and clandestine international drug networks. Though highly dangerous, uncertain, and short-term (and putatively illegal), such activities nonetheless offer these young men the status, identity, sense of belonging, and remunerative opportunities denied them by the rest of society.

Aiding and abetting these consequence of pervasive institutional failure is the belief among Jamaicans in general, and its young urban poor men in particular, that efforts expended in school will not be rewarded by the labour market, and that overt transgressions of the law by the rich is unlikely to result in serious punishment (a simple phone call by well-connected professionals to police headquarters is all that is needed to remove even a basic traffic violation). “Concrete floors and ceilings” that prevent downward and upward mobility, rather than high economic inequality, thus lock Jamaicans into a rigid and oppressive class structure that is belied by the formal aggregate data. As a young Rasta man from Waterhouse puts it,

It’s like the upstream has a plan for the downstream by dividing and ruling. They make that division amongst poor people, and separate them in lots of different subsets... [T]hey have a plan after the divisions on how to manipulate so that they can stay on top. They maintain the division by keeping us hungry. Lack of employment, lack of education... it’s total darkness... [T]he people turn on each other here, dog eat dog... in all the communities.

In short, weak governments, mismanaged economies, and divided societies do indeed fuel violence—in Jamaica, as they do elsewhere. The general theory is largely accurate, but becomes so in Jamaica only by delving deeper into the details of its political and social structures.

The manifestation of these factors are not Jamaican “cultural traits”, but rather are products of its unique colonial history, the timing and nature of its independence, the legacy of key early policy decisions regarding voter accountability and the provision of basic services (education, health, transport and communications infrastructure) to poor communities, the impact of having state revenue derived largely from a “point-source” (i.e., easily controllable, if not “loot-able”) natural resource⁴² in bauxite, and Jamaica’s position at the vortex of key international drug routes. Given these constraints and conditions, it is highly unlikely that any straight-forward set of technocratic policy fixes exists that could radically curb the violence; nor it is likely that “conditions” imposed by external actors (development agencies, foreign governments) will have a lasting impact (though of course this does not mean that the actions of external development actors are of no consequence).

Given the underlying sources of the conflict as we have identified them, two sets of “policy responses” centered on reducing the incentives for both participating in political tribalism and

⁴² On the impacts of point-source natural resources on governance and growth, see Isham et al (2005). Collier et al (2003), among others, identify “loot-able” natural resources such as diamonds as a key source of violence.

resisting political reform appear to make the most sense. The first set of responses focuses on actions that even the current (flawed) political structure is likely to favor. Among these actions is generating employment, both through reforms that make Jamaica more attractive as a potential recipient of labor-intensive foreign investment (upgrading infrastructure, enhancing the technical skills of its English-speaking population, improving macroeconomic stability)⁴³, and through domestic vocational programs (guaranteed work schemes, basic skills training) and improved public services (especially transport, housing, and policing) that enhance the likelihood that young Jamaicans, especially poor young men, have a decent chance to pursue legitimate ways of earning a living and supporting a family. Less desperate citizens, with more desirable employment options and hopeful futures, will be less likely to be lured into violence and criminal activity. These are some policy recommendations regarding *what* might be done; our analysis also suggests, however, that more attention needs to be given to the importance of understanding *how*, and *by whom*, these (and any other) policies might be implanted. (In this sense, the case of Jamaica is most certainly not unique.)

As such, the second set of recommendations centers on “empowering” Jamaican citizens themselves, the vast majority of whom desire positive, effective, and sustainable political reform. Broad-based citizen movements able to demand great openness, better organisational performance, and higher levels of accountability from their political leaders will be contributing to an on-going process of reform that the majority of Jamaican citizens can realistically own, identify with, and contribute to. The current political structure is likely to resist these reforms, however, given that they benefit from the prevailing status quo, but in many respects giving civil society organisations the resources and autonomy they need offers the best starting point, since (unlike many other conflict-ridden countries in the developing world) nascent democratic institutions are already in place. Moreover, we have shown that local civic initiatives, while clearly imperfect and (unsurprisingly) unable on their own to sustain a lasting drop in the violence, offer a glimmer of hope that citizens themselves, adequately supported and mobilized, can at least be an important part of the solution. Among these initiatives have been innovative and context-specific efforts to establish local Peace and Justice Centres, to leverage existing positive school/community relationship for the purposes of addressing crime and violence, and to enhance the quality of inter-community recreational facilities. To these we would add recommendations to:

- Expand and strengthen community consultative committees, and legislate their terms of reference

⁴³ Improvements in infrastructure and macroeconomic stability have been achieved somewhat with highway construction and gradual improvement in the GDP/debt ratio over time. This has been the basis/motivation for

- Encourage the private sector to form active partnerships with poor urban communities through a national Adopt-a-Community program
- Launch a “Death Swap” program, in which guns would be swapped for education and job credits
- Improve police effectiveness and police-community relations through:
 - Launching new initiatives for community policing
 - Strengthening the ability of the Public Complaints Authority to independently investigate charges against the police
 - Radically restructuring the top level of JCF through early retirement of senior level personnel
 - Conducting independent assessment of CMU and SACTF
 - Adopting and reinforcing standardized procedures for cordoning and searching communities
 - Institutionalize continuous training in the (proper and judicious) use of firearms.
 - Speeding up training processes that expand the non-policing functions of police and put more uniformed personnel on the streets
 - Utilizing reformed gang-leaders in the fight against crime and violence

Coordinated national policies and local programs are both needed to stem the violence in Jamaica, but in general, external development actors can best assist by recognizing and rewarding what Jamaican community based organisations of good will are already doing, or striving to do. At the end of the day, the citizens of Jamaica must be the owners and drivers of any reform process, irrespective of whether it ultimately succeeds or fails.

What we are trying to do is to help those who are on the outside of these geographic locations to realize that there are talents here. You have [people] here who are highly qualified and are waiting to assist, just given the opportunity.

Radio Station Manager, ROOTS FM ‘The Voice of the Inner-City’
(located in Olympic Gardens, broadcast in Kingston)

increased foreign direct investment of a certain kind, primarily hotel resorts, but Jamaicans are often not hired on these construction job sites as they lack the requisite skills, even at that level.

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