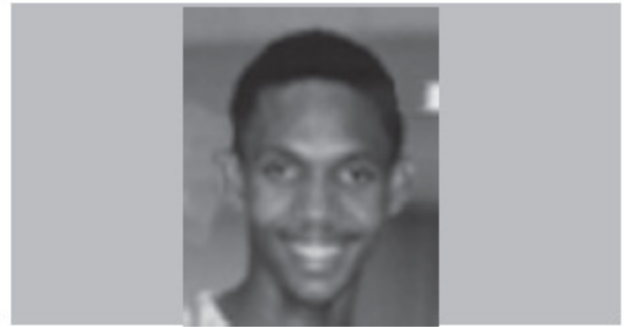


Youth in Crisis a national phenomenon

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Our society today is plagued by a cancer that is eating away at its most vulnerable members. A large proportion of today's youth has been overwhelmed by a culture of hopelessness, caught in a cycle of poverty from which they see no escape. While the country develops economically, they are left behind disenfranchised and alienated. They see the train of prosperity and cannot see a means to board it, so they decide to stop it by force. For many, financial stability lies not in the market of jobs but drugs. Many live in environments where those who wield power and influence in their left hand, wield a semi-automatic in the right. The lack of positive role models tilts the balance further to the emergent criminal elements.



This is where the government has failed dreadfully. Instead of being models of leadership concerned with developing programs to uplift the downtrodden, they squabble over quick-fixes, using the suffering of the impoverished as political fodder. Not only do many youths not vote, they are fed up with the false promises of the parties in power and continue to be in a state of crisis.

...Compliment to Youth

(from page 1) Historically, the community served as the backbone of resistance during slavery and was a major linchpin for cultural preservation. The wisdom of the community was relied upon throughout our history to present day. Now the guidance that had been provided by the community has been diminished and there has been an increased reliance by youths on the media and their peers for that. Also the generation gap threatens to become a canyon and with a lack of understanding, there is a lack of respect as well. This tearing along age boundaries has parents struggling to stay relevant and there seems to be too many cases where this struggle is lost. There is a great need for education on parenting as their children are facing new challenges.

It was recently reported by the Caribbean Epidemiological Centre that in Trinidad and Tobago, AIDS is the third ranking cause of death for men between the ages of 15 and 24 years. In fact, one study has indicated that the Caribbean is second only to Sub-Saharan Africa when it comes to infection rate. We are faced with a prevailing fear of AIDS in an age where sexuality is used excessively as a mechanism of the media and the music industry. This challenge needed and still needs a deliberate and coordinated response, especially in our education system. Coping mechanisms and counselling as well as sex education should have been provided in a more comprehensive way to counteract this disease. Overlay this with a media obsessed with negative portrayals and the effect is a desolate scene.

Yet, our nation has produced such achievers as Darrel Brown, Dwayne Bravo, George Bovell and Ravi Rampaul, as well as those numerous A'level 'world beaters' we seem to produce every year. Our nation has displayed not only a valuable human resource but also achievements that we can hold up world wide. However, these achievers are just the most notable of an army of progressive youth. An army filled with many unsensational but positive stories such as those of hardworking students, aspiring artistes and striving young sportsmen and sportswomen. Considering the adverse environment, we should not blind ourselves to the negativity which pervades among the youth. It is evident that many should be paid some compliment for the positive parts they decided to play. If we target the wrong roles to exclusively promote in our front pages and conversations, we in fact strengthen what we seek to stop. Let us use those most notable achievers as symbols to galvanise the belief of a nation. Let us choose a new part to play.

Homeless Children A national responsibility

The National Youth Action Committee (NYAC) congratulates the National Women's Action Committee in undertaking the challenge of vagrancy in Trinidad and Tobago. We are particularly concerned with the disturbing phenomenon of "Street Children" in T&T. NYAC feels that this negative circumstance of our nation's youth has been neglected for too long. We believe that the development of our youths is inextricably linked to our nation's growth, and therefore should be addressed as a societal concern.

These children are exposed to exploitation of all kinds including sexual abuse. Many are led into a life of crime through the need to survive. Many are undernourished, live in unsanitary conditions which increases the risk of contracting diseases. The children of this nation need our help. It is time for change. The National Youth Action Committee is calling on the citizens of T&T to join the National Women's Action Committee in their thrust for the eradication of homelessness.