

AFRICAN CANADIANS IN THE GREATER TORONTO AREA SHARE
EXPERIENCES OF POLICE PROFILING

VOICES

In Their Own VOICES



By: Maureen Brown

For the African Canadian Community Coalition on Racial Profiling

March 2004



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Commissioned by the African Canadian Community
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BACKGROUND

The African Canadian Community Coalition on Racial Profiling (ACCCRP) was established in 2002 by the African Canadian Legal Clinic (ALCLC) to develop a united and effective community position on the issue of racial profiling, and in particular, its impact on the African Canadian community. The ACCCRP, which started as a coalition of over 35 organizations and leaders within the African Canadian community, has grown to include over 57 representatives.

The ACCCRP aims to be inclusive of the diversity of communities and interests that currently exist within the Black community. Despite its brief history the ACCCRP has played a leading and active role in articulating the African Canadian community's collective voice on this crucial and timely issue. The ACCCRP organized a successful press conference in response to the Toronto Star's series of articles on racial profiling, which validated decades of concerns raised by the African Canadian community on this insidious and pervasive problem. The Coalition issued several press releases critiquing the decision of the Toronto police force for yet another study on race relations rather than engaging in a sincere action-oriented dialogue with Toronto's Black community leaders, with respect to the issue of racial profiling and race relations. In 2003, with the support of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation and the Federal Department of Multiculturalism, the ACCCRP commissioned Charles C. Smith and Maureen J. Brown to conduct research on best practices and responses to racial profiling in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. As part of the research process, ACCCRP convened consultations with communities to record their concerns and experiences. This research has resulted in two reports entitled Crisis, Conflict and Accountability, and In Their Own Voices. These Reports will be launched at a national Consensus Conference in March 2004 in celebration of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The ACCCRP continues to call for the following:

1. The establishment of an Independent Police Complaints and Oversight Body to hold the police accountable for their actions and to address community concerns regarding racism and racial profiling.
2. To work with all levels of government to provide adequate resources to the Black community for developing and implementing a community based documentation project whereby African Canadians can gather the stories and complaints from African Canadians who are victims of racial profiling.
3. The establishment of a process to implement the recommendations that have been made in existing reports on policing, along with an independent audit mechanism to review the effectiveness of this implementation process every two years.

The African Canadian Legal Clinic continues to co-ordinate the meetings and activities of the ACCCRP. The African Canadian Legal Clinic and ACCCRP remain committed to working with the Black community to pressure all three levels of government to develop and bring forward concrete and effective legislative, policy and program reform. This will ensure that the recommendations as contained in these two Reports will be implemented in order to end racial profiling.

March 2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1	SETTING THE SCENE	7
	The Landscape	7
	Getting to the Truth	8
	How the Study Was Done	9
	The Question of Statistics	9
	Perception vs. Reality	10
	A Deep and Complex Rage	12
CHAPTER 2	ANATOMY OF PROFILING	14
	Use of Force	14
	Tagging and Clocking	16
	Name Calling and Intimidation	17
	Routine Checks	18
	The Description	19
	Power Play	21
	Breaking the Spirit	22
CHAPTER 3	WHERE PROFILING HAPPENS	23
	‘Walking to the Store to Buy Bleach’	23
	‘On Your Property and	23
	In Your Neighbourhood’	23
	‘In Front of Your Apartment Building	24
	‘On the Street in Plain Open View’	25
	Driving	26
	At the Store	27
 Filing Reports	27
 In Search of Drugs and Guns	27
Chapter 4	IMPACT OF PROFILING	31
	A Sense of Injustice	31
	“It’s Not What They Say...”	32
	Do-Rags and Baggy Pants	33
	Restricted Freedom of Movement	36
	No Place to Play or Dream	36
	‘Unintentional Systemic Facilitation’	38
	Resilience	39

CHAPTER 5	A CONTEXT FOR SOLUTIONS	.40
	`We Are Not the Same`	.40
	`To Challenge is to Reject`	.40
	`Through Other People's Experiences`	.41
	`Forget the Past and Move On`	.42
CHAPTER 6	SOLUTIONS	.45
	Hire More African Canadian Officers	.46
	Create Positive Outlets for Youth	.47
	Help Police Bring Law-Breakers to Justice	.47
	Don't Criminalize Entire Communities	.48
	Recognize Youth Potential	.48
	Know that Some of us are Wealthy	.48
	Eliminate Negative Stereotyping	.50
	Improve Police Interpersonal Training	.50
	Interact and Communicate	.50
	Recognize Your Own Vulnerabilities	.51
	Keep Youth Behaviour in Perspective	.52
EPILOGUE		.53

Interviewees in this study were drawn from across the Greater Toronto Area, specifically, Toronto, Peel, York Region and Durham Region. One interviewee shared an experience with the Ontario Provincial Police. Interviewees' names have been changed.

RACIAL PROFILING

"Any action undertaken for reasons of safety, security or public protection that relies on stereotypes...rather than on reasonable suspicion, to single an individual for greater scrutiny or different treatment."

Paying the Price: The Human Cost of Racial Profiling, Ontario Human Rights Commission

"A set of circumstances, events, or behavior that, when combined with the experience of an officer, may cause heightened suspicion that affects the officer's exercise of discretion..."

Elizabeth A. Knight and William Kurnik, as quoted in **Crisis, Conflict and Accountability**,
by Charles C. Smith

"Investigative or enforcement activity initiated by an individual officer based on his or her stereotypical, prejudicial or racist perceptions of who is likely to be involved in wrong doing or criminal activity. This conduct is unintentionally systemically facilitated when there is ineffective policy, training, monitoring and control mechanisms in a system."

(Canadian) Association of Black Law Enforcers (A.B.L.E.)

"...that phenomenon whereby certain criminal activity is attributed to an identified group in society on the basis of race or colour resulting in the targeting of individual members of that group. In this context, race is illegitimately used as a proxy for the criminality or general criminal propensity of an entire racial group."

R. v. Richards (1999), Ontario Court of Appeal

CHAPTER 1: Setting the Scene

This report provides first-person accounts by African Canadians in the Greater Toronto Area who believe they have been racially profiled and targeted by police. The interviewees share their perceptions of these incidents and offer insights to those who seek to address the problem. We share these stories with the following in mind: :

- (1) African Canadians' belief that as a group they are singled out by police is reflected in the accounts they share about police decision to stop and or question them as they go about their business. They question the behaviour of officers during those encounters. They complain of police body searches, verbal abuse, name-calling and the seeming assumption that if Blacks are driving 'nice' cars there is a good chance that those cars have been stolen.
- (2) The report documents a phenomenon. It is NOT a reflection of any individual police service. Interviewees were drawn from across the Greater Toronto Area and at least one interviewee shared an experience with the Ontario Provincial Police as he was driving on the highway.
- (3) We have documented the phenomenon of racial profiling because as a society we can't manage what we can't measure, nor can we deny what we have not documented. Through their stories, African Canadians have laid the challenge to society, to consider the experiences they feel are unique to them in policing and to use these experiences as catalysts for increased police accountability, which they believe will result in increased community support of policing.

The report paints a picture of racial profiling, a phenomenon that is widely discussed—and denied—but not always documented. As such, *In Their Own Voices* falls between research into the existence of racial profiling and the report's companion piece, *Crisis, Conflict and Accountability*, written by Charles C. Smith, which traces the history of and best practices to address police racial profiling in the U.K., the U.S. and Canada. *In their Own Voices* also complements the recently released Ontario Human Rights Commission report, *Paying the Price: The Human Cost of Racial Profiling*, which highlights the impact of profiling on individuals and on communities. Like the Commission's report, *In their Own Voices* is based exclusively on first person and eyewitness accounts of African Canadian interactions with the police.

The Landscape

Racial profiling is a divisive and polarizing issue, one that portrays those who acknowledge and seek to address it as anti-police, pro-criminal or soft on crime, while lauding those who deny it for portraying the police as being always within their bounds—except for the 'occasional' individual who oversteps his or her bounds. Inevitably the discussion tends to focus on the question: "Does racial profiling by police exist?" instead of the question: "What is it about the experiences that Blacks are having with the police that leave them often feeling disrespected, targeted and victims of racial profiling, otherwise known as racially biased policing?"

The interviewees in this report answer the latter question by describing behaviours, sequences of events and outcomes of encounters with the police, that have left them feeling profiled and targeted. We discover common areas in the experiences and perspectives of youth and older adults; city dwellers and regional residents; wealthy suburbanites and inner city poor. Though experiences with and feelings towards the police vary within these communities--we include voices of African Canadians who believe that police act within bounds in their dealings with Blacks—there is often a

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

belief that police use race as a factor in determining who is likely to commit or who has committed a crime. In Their Own Voices does not prove whether or not racial profiling exists. As one African Canadian police officer puts it, “(racial profiling) is not an academic issue...when you experience it, you know it.” The report does not reflect the motive of individual police officers: rather it provides a breakdown of what profiling looks like—based on people’s experiences—and places profiling within the broader context of society. The stories that people share also offer a glimpse of the unease that even the most ardent supporters of the police feel at one point or other when sons, daughters and spouses go through the door. For them the issue is not whether their loved ones stand a chance of being unreasonably questioned by police at some point, but rather how these incidents should be regarded and handled.

Getting to the Truth

An experiential study like In their Own Voices generates two questions (1) are interviewees telling the truth and (2) are these just a ‘few’ people who ‘occasionally’ have negative encounters with maverick police officers? The answers to these questions should interest all sectors of society, from community workers who advocate on behalf of profiled community members; to faith groups who, increasingly, are weighing in on the issue; to law makers charged with maintaining our social fabric of justice and equity.

The stories should be of particular interest to police services. If in fact, during the course of doing their jobs of serving and protecting their communities police officers are using race as a factor in establishing ‘criminality’ or ‘criminal propensity’ and if, according to the Association of Black Law Enforcers (ABLE), these practices are being “unintentionally systemically facilitated” by police organizations, society, and most of all the police themselves, should want to hear the voices of community members whose experiences differ from what police services intend. They should also be prepared to accept the validity of these voices.

The African Canadian Community Coalition Against Racial Profiling (ACCCRP) wrestled the question of credibility and provided the researcher with the following framework:

We expect people to relate their experiences truthfully. We are interested in what happened. As such we want to know what the individual himself or herself did (during the interaction) as well.

There is a feeling in the African Canadian community that because of negative stereotypes African Canadians, especially youth, are not given the benefit of the doubt in situations involving ‘systems’—whether policing, schools or otherwise. At the same time, African Canadian perceptions of these incidents play a major role in their attitude towards these systems and, possibly towards representatives of these systems with whom they come in contact. We therefore feel that it is important to give these members of our communities a voice so that they can share their perspectives, regardless of whether or not others agree with them. If the research reveals similar patterns of police-African Canadian interactions in various U.S. states, other Canadian provinces and British jurisdictions, the stories’ credibility will be reinforced by the features they share in common.

The resulting stories are indeed consistent with reports from jurisdictions outside of the GTA and are startling in their consistency. Still, to ensure that we were not ‘putting words into people’s mouths’, we invited interviewees to share with us positive experiences with the police as well, if they felt these were important in contextualizing their experiences of profiling. Some did. Some—by far the minority—even related accounts that others view as profiling, but which they see as par for the course in policing. We felt it was important to include all voices.

How The Study Was Done

Interviewees came to the study by a variety of means. We asked community organizers and municipal recreational workers to arrange for us to meet with groups of youth in their neighborhood who had had encounters with the police—positive or negative. The researcher also interviewed area residents randomly at local basketball courts and hangouts (again, community workers typically paved the way by ‘validating’ the interviewer and the study and encouraging youth to speak), which they did, usually only after being guaranteed anonymity. We met people at community conferences; followed up on referrals from interviewees and asked acquaintances to share personal stories.

We also got referrals from networks of youth-serving organizations; a joint Ontario Human Rights Commission-ACCCRP focus group; and, through the Association of Black Law Enforcers. We interviewed about 100 persons individually and in small groups and we held informal conversations with community and church leaders for background and perspective. Some interviews produced full-length accounts—stories—of dramatic incidents involving the police. Others yielded brief encounters, emotions, perspectives and suggestions for addressing racial profiling.

We posed to interviewees the following questions:

- 1) Describe interaction(s) you have had with the police. Were these interactions positive or negative?
- 2) If these incidents were positive what caused them to be so? If negative, what caused them to be so? Have police ever targeted or profiled you?
- 3) How should racial profiling be addressed?

The purpose of the interviews is not to establish through numbers the extent of racial profiling of African Canadians, although many interviewees see profiling as an inseparable aspect of being Black. Our purpose is to show what profiling—or ‘racially biased policing’—looks like through the eyes of African Canadians who have experienced it. We are not trying to establish numbers or to attribute blame to a particular police service, so we do not recount all the stories, since after a while they become ‘more of the same. Rather the report features types of encounters with the police. We taped and transcribed the stories, except for situations where interviewees were uncomfortable with taping. In these cases the interviewer took notes.

The Question of Statistics

Arguments about statistical evidence are threatening to overshadow the bigger picture of dissatisfaction some African Canadians feel over the way their communities are being policed. Academics, legal experts, statisticians, actuaries and some police organizations have taken to using the ‘my expert vs. your expert’, ‘my figures vs. your figures’ approach to the issue. The feeling among many is that police do not target people by race and even if they do, the numbers are not statistically significant enough to merit major social concern.

We suggest four reasons for taking racial profiling seriously, regardless of how many or how few people it affects.

First, in a society that places implicit trust in the police, even one case of profiling is one too many. The truth is, we don’t know whether or not the experiences people share are isolated or whether they are but the tip of an iceberg. Occasional or not, there are tens, hundreds, maybe even thousands of African Canadians that are experiencing inequitable policing. For them arguments about statistics take a backseat to the sense of betrayal they feel when those charged with

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

protecting them are instead victimizing them. Whether or not the stories are reflective of a widespread phenomenon, we owe it to ourselves as a society to come up with widespread solutions.

Secondly, as evidenced in Charles C. Smith's research, the stories are consistent with others coming out of the U.S., Britain and other parts of Canada. In some of these jurisdictions anecdotal evidence is being backed up by statistics-based surveys. The door remains open for similar statistics-based research in Canada.

The third reason for taking these stories seriously is that trying to prove statistically, scientifically and beyond a shadow of a doubt, whether or not racial profiling exists is like trying to prove statistically, scientifically and beyond a shadow of a doubt that a patient writhing on the floor indeed has a stomach ache, as he says he does. Physicians can retrace what he has eaten; they can check for ulcers; they can eliminate as many known probable causes as possible. In the end if the person is still writhing on the floor the physicians know there may be only one way of establishing what's wrong—open the person up.

In conducting exploratory surgery the physician takes the person's word that (a) something is indeed wrong and (b) the pain is not actually in some other part of their body. Few people would subject themselves to a surgeon's knife based on theatrics. Although over the years society has taken steps to address racial profiling, the 'writhing on the floor' we found during the interviews suggests that either a proper diagnosis has not been made, or that we are not tackling the problem in a way that provides a long-term solution.

The fourth reason for taking anecdotal stories seriously, whether or not they are thought to be statistically significant, is that they come from a cross-section of African Canadians: youth as young as 11, mature business people, community workers, police officers, church pastors and others with intimate knowledge of, or experience with profiling. Some of these conversations provide backdrop, perspective and balance. Others are cited because the individual has witnessed or experienced profiling themselves.

Perception vs. Reality

In line with questions of truth and statistical significance we also face the inevitable P- word: 'perception'. Are African Canadians really being targeted for differential treatment? Or is it their perception that they are being profiled? The interviews suggest a simple answer: perception is reality. This does not mean that every perceived act of profiling is in fact so. The trouble with perception, however, is that it plays a significant role in police- African Canadian interaction. Perception runs on both sides of these interactions. It appears that police, like other members of society, are as affected by popular notions of what to expect from African Canadians as African Canadians are affected by what to expect from police when they meet.

The result is a lethal brew of fear, posturing, suspicion and distrust that can ratchet even a simple encounter up to levels that lead to arrest, resistance, a criminal record and 'confirmation' that police dislike African Canadians or that African Canadians are 'pre-disposed to crime'. The following scenario, through use of composites of interviewees, illustrates how this can happen.

Marlon, Tariq and Officer Smith

Parents, friends and his own experience have taught Marlon that the police are his friends and that he should feel free to approach them. He therefore has no second thoughts when Officer Smith approaches him as he walks home from a party and asks him for his name or identification. He does not react 'with attitude' when the Officer asks him to empty

his pockets and his backpack. In fact, he does not even question what Officer Smith means when he says that this is a “routine check” and a “routine pat-down”. The term racial profiling does not cross his mind.

Officer Smith has a job to do, a job he loves and of which he is proud. He has chosen his profession because he believes in an ordered society. But he also finds fulfilment in helping lost children, protecting seniors from muggers, fund-raising for charity and protecting the community from dangers seen and unseen. Officer Smith has no particular philosophy about African Canadians as a group. What he does have is an ‘instinct’ for crime and, from experience, a gut sense of the types of persons likely to commit particular crimes.

Tariq did not have the upbringing Marlon did. Actually, he did, but his experience led him to change his view of the police by the time he was 15. A bright, perceptive young man, he loves his high school law course and plans to become a lawyer. So when Officer Smith approaches him and a couple of his friends one night and orders them up against the wall for a search, he has many questions, which he asked the Officer. Why are you doing this? What did we do wrong? Don’t you have to have reasonable and probable grounds to stop us like this?

Officer Smith is in no mood to engage in a social science lesson with a 15-year-old. “It’s a routine pat down”, he replies, adding threateningly, “You people think you’re bad, don’t you.” Tariq reluctantly submits to the search. His friends seem undisturbed as they do the same. They later laugh the incident off. They have seen and experienced this type of treatment before. They actually scold Tariq for talking back to ‘The Man’. Don’t do that next time, they admonish him. ‘The Man’ does not like to be challenged. It’s the quickest way into the backseat of a cruiser and on the path away from law school. Tariq’s questions turn to anger, particularly as other friends at school with whom he shares the incident react with the same kind of ‘So where have you been’ attitude his friends demonstrated that night.

Are Marlon and Tariq victims of racial profiling, or in the term being proposed by a Joint Working Group of the Toronto Police Services Board, of “racially biased policing”? Is Officer Smith merely doing his job or is he a racist maverick who has under the cover of darkness engaged in the uncommon act of racial profiling? Does it matter what label society puts on the exchanges that night? Should we be concerned with Tariq’s growing anger or with Officer Smith’s policing methods; with Marlon’s blitheness or with the acceptance on the part of Tariq’s friends that they live in a society in which they have no right to ask why they are being (in their minds) randomly searched by a police officer? Who is the victim and who is the villain?

Strangers in a Foreign Land

Perception (or mis-perception), regardless of its source, serves as a Great Divide in discussing racial profiling and many interviewed believe that they stand on the losing side of the Divide. In their minds, while Blacks are often portrayed as social threats, police are equipped with guns, batons, tasers, two-way radios, ability to summon an army of cars for back up, a powerful union and, most critically, public goodwill. For African Canadians who feel this way, police racial profiling is merely an extension of a society’s desire to keep them in their place.

The way they react to police then is tied to the overall landscape of their lives. They filter police behaviour towards them through ‘lenses’ such as those used by a group of youth who put together the recent African Canadian submission to the United Nations Rapporteur on Race:

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

I am The African Canadian Youth...feared by some, reviled by others, misunderstood by even many who try to help me, regarded with hope by those who believe I can Rise. The first thing you need to know about me is that like all other Canadians I am offered protections under the laws of this country. As a matter of fact, the Government Official will show you the policies, programs [and] initiatives that she will say are designed for youth. I am a youth and in her eyes there is nothing stopping me from reaching out and taking my share of the pie. Even my parents sometimes chide me for not taking my share of what [African Canadian author Cecil Foster] says is, in the eyes of an immigrant generation, "a place called heaven". And when I marvel at the gleam of Corporate Canada; when I see the Good Life in TV ads; when I hear of scholarship programs and opportunities to travel and[of] an offer of a second chance under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, I see why to some this is a place called heaven.

But there is another side of Paradise that you need to visit. This side is not included in The Guided Tour. It's not on the map. As a matter of fact, were it not for me and for those who fight on my behalf, you wouldn't even know it existed. It's our own little family secret...our Secret Garden of weeds, underbrush and Unacknowledged Spaces."

African Canadians who feel this way echo African American writer John Wideman, who points out that: The problem is our culture's deeply conflicted attitude toward [Black] boys, its habit of reaching out with one hand to play, to embrace and to celebrate, while with the other hand's a hidden fist, cocked, loaded to strike." (Essence Magazine, November 2003)

Essence editorial director Susan L. Taylor further captures the filter through which many interpret police behaviour: "The cool indifference, posturing and self-centered...profile are the faces that some [Black men] front in a society that systematically tries to emasculate them, that has demonized them and built a... prison industry to contain them." Even Black men "on top of their game", Taylor says, are not immune.

A Deep and Complex Rage

Forever seared in listeners' minds is the brokenness in the voice of an African Canadian businessman in a joint ACCRP-Ontario Human Rights Commission focus group, as he described the treatment he received at the hands of security personnel and later police when a seemingly simple act of returning merchandise went horribly wrong. It's difficult to see a grown man cry. It's gut-wrenching to see a tall, distinguished looking African Canadian businessman hang his head as he tries to fight back tears. "They've broken me", he says softly. "They've broken me."

What the businessman described that day was not just a debatable act of racial profiling—debatable as in "Was I treated this way because I'm Black, or because I deserved it?" He was placing the treatment by law enforcement officers within the context of broken expectations of how he should have been treated in such an incident. He was echoing Tariq's disillusionment with the vision of courtesy one normally expects when one is agitated while dealing with the police, though not necessarily rude.

The businessman expressed feelings held by Dudley, who agrees to be interviewed for In Their Own Voices only after much persuasion. Dudley has buried the thoughts of that night when he was accosted by a police officer as he and his friends left a nightclub. He tells his story slowly, hesitantly, brushing away the memories as one would an invisible fly. Dudley's calm exterior belies a deep and complex rage that seeps out in the words he uses and in his body language. His rage is deep because he has tied his experiences with the police to other disappointments in life, disappointments he attributes partly to his status as a Black man in society, partly because he failed to listen to his mother and made bad choices. In Dudley's eyes there are few socially acceptable ways of expressing how he feels. His rage is complex

because at 27 his negative encounters with police are colliding with the dawning reality that he won't ever be an NBA star. Dudley has no marketable skill and he feels like a failure.

Although interviewees place clear responsibility for police behaviour at the feet of police services, they see solutions in the form of partnership between the police, African Canadian youth, local African Canadian communities and society at large. Their stories are sometimes poignant, sometimes gut-wrenching. Some reflect wilful acts on the part of police officers, others suggest that 'how things are done' has a unique impact on African Canadian communities—a classic definition of the 'unintentional systemic facilitation' ABLE speaks about.

African Canadians interviewed do not expect that police will overlook it if they are carrying drugs when stopped. They do expect that, per the law, they will be stopped only if officers have reasonable and probable grounds to believe that they have drugs in their possession. They know that if their licence plate is missing they can be stopped and that once stopped they can be asked for i.d. They do not expect that as they walk along the street, police will pull up and ask for i.d. as part of a "routine check". They do not deny that African Canadians have their share of lawbreakers among them, as with any other sub-group in society. They do wonder what others who are not stopped and searched as frequently have in their backpacks and cars as they pass smugly by.

In the end, the interviewees seek fair and equitable treatment, not special treatment.

Chapter 2

ANATOMY OF PROFILING

What does profiling look like? Feel like? Is profiling deliberate? Circumstantial? Is it an element of 'good policing'? Does it yield the desired results?

In this chapter African Canadians of different ages describe encounters in which they believe they were racially profiled by police. The accounts bear startling consistency. Age does not seem to make a difference. Nor is the sense of violation, resignation and brooding anger limited to any one type of storyteller. Interestingly, even those who overall are positive about policing and the methods being used to 'keep our community safe' point to abuse of police power as a real obstacle to the kind of community cooperation that would no doubt make the jobs of the police easier. One thing seems clear: along the way to ridding the community of the bad guys, terrible collateral damage is being done to the psyche of African Canadians, particularly youth, as they seek to define their place in society.

Use of Force

The following account was provided in writing to the interviewer. The writer, a mother of three, is not a 'community advocate'. She works, takes her children to the usual slew of after school activities and, basically, minds her own business. After witnessing the event in question, however, Merlene is horrified and upset. She shocks her husband—and herself—by offering to testify on behalf of a 15-year-old African Canadian boy who she saw being arrested, then beaten, by police officers.

"...At around 10:30 pm, my husband and I pulled into the parking lot of a [fast food] restaurant, located [in a regional municipality outside of Toronto]. On entering the lot, I witnessed a group of 20-30 youths, surrounding a security guard, due to a fight, which had happened earlier on. A black youth in particular, was persistently going after the security guard, in a bullish behavior. A young girl and another black (male) youth were trying to prevent the situation from getting worse.

We continued to stick around and observe the confrontation. I became afraid of what the outcome might bring, so I called 911 and reported, "we've been in the lot for about 8-10 minutes, and there seems to be no backup in site" (sic). During the 911 call sounds of sirens were evident and I ended the call. When the youth who was going after the guard heard the sirens he ran off, which led to a foot chase by the guard north on [an adjacent road] where the youth disappeared.

From then on things turned for the worst. The security guard was seen afterwards, running west of [the Road], followed by a black youth holding a piece of "iron pipe". The youth confronted him in what appeared to be a non-harming manner. We continued to observe. By then the police cruisers, started surrounding the area. At least four police officers came to the guard's rescue, one of whom jumped the youth [Grant] from behind and pinned him face down, in an arresting gesture. Grant did not appear to be resisting arrest or even had the chance of fighting back. He did, however, say to the officer "What are you trying to do, aren't you going to read me my rights". By then, he was handcuffed, still facing downward.

All of a sudden the officer drew his baton and started to severely beat Grant with it. In the midst of all this, the security

guard did try telling them, that "he (Grant) was not the one causing the fight".

I stood steps away from the situation, watching the officer making the arrest, in amazement. I distinctly, stood there, saying out loud, "I cannot believe what I'm seeing. This is so not right and unfair. It's wrong, I cannot believe it". One of the officers turned in surprise and shone his flashlight at me. He pointed to the piece of pipe in his hand and said "Ma'am, he was trying to hit the security guard with it". I said to the officer, "I did not see that and it's wrong, the way you are hitting him". The arresting officer pulled Grant up, walked him across the street to the parked cruiser, and put him in the back seat. The security guard was standing around with total loss of control.

My husband and I followed along; I wanted to see the outcome. Not one of the officers ever came over to me and asked, if I saw what happened earlier". Grant's mom arrived and was prevented from contact with her son. I told her, "I witnessed the beating and was very upset". I offered her my name etc....

The fact, of the matter is, in my opinion, the officers did not seem the least bit interested in getting the details, they were more interested in clearing the area, and that the other youths left standing around will all start walking away."

Merlene's anger centres on the following questions.

- (a) Why did the police not ask her for a statement even though she told them she saw the incident?*
- (b) Why was Grant's mother prevented from speaking to him, especially given that he is under-age?*
- (c) Why did at least some of the officers not chase after or gather information that would have helped them find the earlier aggressor? And, most critically;*
- (d) Why did the police beat the boy after he was handcuffed?*

Merlene believes the police acted in a racially biased fashion. She says that Grant's mother has shown her a copy of the police account of the incident. The mother is upset over details such as allegation that Grant grabbed the officer's flashlight and was waving it around threateningly. She wants the case to be resolved quickly to prevent Grant from losing his scholarship to a U.S. university. "He did not do that," Merlene insists to the interviewer. "He never had a chance to do that."

Merlene's story is not unique. The interviewer spoke with one family services worker in an inner city neighbourhood, who witnessed the police take a young Black male off a bus. It was in the middle of winter, she said, and the youth's coat somehow came undone. He had been travelling with his little sister, who began to panic and scream as she saw what was happening to her brother. The police, the worker said, threw the youth face down, on the frozen car, where they held him for a prolonged period, despite his pleas to let him put his coat on. As his sister continued crying and trying to help her brother, the officer, she said, grabbed the child roughly and held her up from the ground.

In another account, one woman, also a community recreational worker, describes seeing officers chasing a young teen across a parking lot as she watched from her ground floor apartment. When they caught up with the teen they began to search him. They pulled a small quantity of drugs from his pocket...then they felt something else inside. The officers roughly threw the boy to the ground, handcuffed him then began to search his pockets. The officers began to slam the boy into the ground and an inhaler (a 'puffer' used by asthmatics) rolled out of his pocket. She says the officers continued slamming the boy until she and others ran out of the apartment telling them to stop. She says she shouted at them that: "We have seen too many of our young men die like this".

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

A 29-year-old mother of four named Patsy, gives a similar account of the morning the police detained her for leaving her children overnight without proper supervision, following a message from the school that the children were not in school. She admits she was wrong in leaving her children while she went to the doctor and her husband went to work.

"When I got to the station they told me to explain myself. [I did]. Then they locked me in a room by myself and turned the air conditioning on really cold...Then they take me to this (other room). They chain my feet and they chain my hands behind me and one of my hands was sick and I said to them that my right hand is not well, it broke or slipped out. They tighten the cuff really tight and they start to push me really hard for no reason at all. I (hadn't) killed nobody.

"It was in November and the way that I (was) frightened I didn't wear a jacket and my husband take my jacket for me and they tell him that I'm OK. I told them that I am cold. And you know what they do? They take a blanket that they use to cover the dog with and give it to me. I said no, this (is) full of dog hair. They said "well, we have nothing else for you". I said can I get one from my house and they said no.

"They were really rough with me. The only name (they didn't call me) was 'Gal'. They were shouting and getting really upset. They hold my head down and push my head into the corner. I said 'I'm a lady you know' and they said 'So?' They deal with me like a nobody...(And) they write on the report that I am mentally ill. So if anybody wants a report on me that's what is stuck in the report."

In another incident, Patsy says she called the police after a teacher grabbed her daughter, leaving deep scratch marks around her neck. When the police arrived, Patsy said they told her that the "teacher had the right to do whatever they want to do".

"I said, 'What?' I am not telling you a lie, I was cussing when they said that...I was really not satisfied with (how they treated me) and I went back over to the station...They said, 'You know what, get out...This is not the reason why police station is here. That's what they said. I don't care (if the police recognize me from this story). A stoppage have to be done."

Tagging and Clocking

"Tagging and clocking" takes many forms. The first is The Look. Youth know the power of a Look. Anthony, a recent scholarship winner on his way to studying in the US has, in his own words, been there, done that. He has engaged in robberies, fights, theft, has been expelled from school and has spent time in jail...all before he turned 18. Today Anthony sounds more like a motivational speaker than a youth delinquent.

"A Look will start a war between two communities...Two people from different (inner city communities) come to the mall. Eye contact will start beef between the two people. When they go outside the mall they will want to fight. Then a whole gang comes in. Then another gang...Just that look. It's powerful....The first thing that comes to my mind will always be the negative."

When it comes to the police, the youth say, *The Look is a game of Chicken: a war of nerves to see who will blink first. If the youth blinks, the police feel they have something to hide. Or that they are giving attitude.* Banks, 15 explains.

"[The police] will look at you, clocking you. Like they expect you to do something."

"It's a daring look", Anthony continues. "A dirty look that that expects you to react negatively. Because obviously, if I smile at you you're going to smile back at me. If I give you a grudge look you're going to give me one back. Obviously if you do that (to the police), they (the police) are going to come and do something to you. These days The Look is the most effective weapon of all. It makes me feel bad...because I know I am not [a bad] person."

Anthony likens the feeling generated by the Look to how he felt in jail, when bars, orders and rules governed his every move.

"I'm caged up. This world is like a cage because you can't move freely. There's people telling you when to leave, [where] to go, how to do [things]. To tell you the truth, sometimes I feel real bad knowing that I'm paying the price for someone else's bad deeds." (Anthony, 18)

Then there is **The Trap**.

"You go by certain parking lots and you'll see 10 squad cars. And if you pass they will question you, they want to tag you, they'll frame you, put stuff on you, try to set you up."

Anthony, 18

According to interviewees, The Trap usually involves establishing a strong presence in a conspicuous part of a neighbourhood, such as a parking lot. Waiting. Waiting. According to the police, waiting to see if criminal activity will take place. According to the youth, waiting for some kid to lose nerve—or, perhaps in the officer's interpretation, display guilt—and run. It's downhill from there as The Chase begins. Once the chase is on, most youth interviewees say, they don't care whether or not they are guilty. They run.

The Pat Down is humiliating to innocent people going about their business. Many of the youth interviewed in different parts of the GTA and in 905 regions talk about having their pockets and personal belongings searched at random by police officers as they walk home. For some, Pat Downs, as with tagging or clocking, are almost a regular part of life. Eighteen year-old Tom had only lived in his 905 community for a couple of months when he had his Pat Down. He had just arrived from a Caribbean island in the middle of winter to join his parents. He was in high school and working two part-time jobs.

One morning Tom was waiting at a coffee shop across from the building where he worked. As he waited for his building to open he huddled against the cold, pulling his hood around his face. Suddenly a police cruiser pulled up and the officers asked him what he was doing there. His explanation was not enough and before long he was draped over the hood of the cold cruiser being searched and pat down. Tom says he bears no ill-feelings, even though the experience was intimidating and humiliating.

Name-Calling and Intimidation

On one occasion as Kofi was walking to a suburban mall with friends a police car drove by. He says the officer called out to him: "Get out of the road, nigger". He accompanied a relative to a hearing at the courthouse when the detectors went off. All the youth were wearing metal belts that triggered the alarm and all checked out clean. His relative's buckle was shaped like a gun. An officer told him to take the belt off. The youth questioned why, it's a belt. He said he couldn't

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

remove his belt or his pants would fall. “They tried to beat him up for no reason. The officer went to his car, got his 45 and cocked it for no reason. They grabbed him, pulled him up [off the floor], put him in the elevator. My cousin said the police cocked guns on him and all that.” His cousin was subsequently charged for “DTP”—disturbing the peace. “It was kind of stupid.”

Routine Checks

“Luckily, I stay two steps ahead of them (police). But does that mean that everybody has to stay three steps in front of the police? It’s not fair”.

(Dwayne, 21)

Of all police behaviours interviewees question, the Routine Check seems most controversial. The term appears frequently in language used especially among inner city youth in describing the reason police give for searching and or questioning them at random.

Lawrence, an African Canadian police officer (not from the GTA area) in his 50s describes being stopped by the police for a seemingly insignificant reason. Did he feel profiled? Yes, he says. Asked why, he explains a 5-step process that, if followed, can reduce the tension of an encounter and lessen the chance of people feeling profiled.

First, Lawrence says, there should be some form of polite greeting: “Good afternoon Sir...”. Next should come the reason the individual is being detained. Between then and the point where the person’s licence is requested for instance, comes body language, tone, cadence and inflection. The individual’s manner of response to the request will likely depend on the officer’s use of these.

For those sharing stories these steps do not seem to be in the picture. How do they know when a stop is “for no reason?”

“When [the police] say it’s a routine check. Like let me see your drivers licence. ...Or that you fit the description of somebody. If you are speeding those are legit arguments.”

(Lawrence, mid-50s)

“Me and my friend were just walking home from school and got pulled over by the cops. They pulled their stuff on him like ‘freeze, freeze’. They said he fit the description of someone that was making gunfire, because he was tall, Black and had a white shirt on...They handcuffed him and put him in the backseat”.

“Sometimes I’ll be walking by myself...or with a group of people... near my house or in my neighbourhood when out of the blue, for no reason they’ll be driving their cars and stop us and they’ll be asking us for I.D [or if you’re packing a weapon]. I don’t know for what reason”. Is takes place in broad daylight or any time else...They just want to harass you ‘cause they’re bored probably.”

(Nick, 17)

Herman, who runs his own repair shop, says he is frequently stopped as part of a routine check while driving. He speaks in matter-of-fact tones. “Whenever they check my information they always find ...everything up to date. So then that’s the only excuse they can give me. They say they have a right to stop us and give us a routine check. ‘That’s his job’, one officer said to me...when I asked him why did he pull me over.” Asked if his friends are as blasé about routine checks Herman replies:

"Most times they say they don't even want to see them (the police). If they see a police officer coming they make a left, or a right, because it's just not worth it to them, you know. They don't have time to be held up by them for no reason."

Asked about his white friends, Herman laughs. "They say they can get away with anything." Are you serious, the interviewer asks? "Yeah, we talk about it all the time". He marvels at the things that a particular friend gets away with as "something he would never believe". His white friend has "that edge", he says, adding, "he doesn't try to use it over us; he just uses it to his advantage because he knows he can get away with it." White friends, Herman says drive around with expired licence plates, "ten day passes expired for month...and they just keep driving."

(Herman, 27)

'The Description'

"They gave him some BS excuse about him stealing shoes...said he fit the description of somebody they thought stole shoes from the mall..."

(Nick, 17)

In an inner city neighborhood police stopped Bryan and his friends and took their names down "for no reason". When officers in the same neighbourhood stopped Sam and asked his name, he refused, querying instead, "Am I under arrest". The officers left him alone. According to Sam, "when you know your rights they know they can't do anything to you. The only thing they can do is catch you some other time and try to beat up on you or whatever." Others like Simon (16) give the police a name...but not their real name. Sometimes, says Simon:

"I tell the police my Mom says not to talk to strangers and I just walk off. "Why should I tell them my name? They write [our names] in their little notebook. They ask us if we have criminal records."

Kevin, 17, says he "avoids" the police when they patrol his neighborhood. "They usually pick on people in a big group,". He feels, however, that the police are justified in randomly interrogating youth.

Sangster, 17 agrees that the police are justified in asking youth personal questions, but he says they sometimes go overboard.

"Sometimes they get mad. They get out of their car and harass people because they don't want to answer their questions. They think they are bad and they'll just check them for no reason. They don't [even] introduce themselves because they say that they are cops and they have the higher authority. No one enjoys being searched but what are you going to do when the cops have you in a corner and searching you? You can't do nothing. If you complain they are normally going to win 'cause they are going to lie on you. They have power because if they suspect you to be doing something bad they can put you in jail for 24 hours."

From the number of interviewees who talk of being approached by police officers saying they "fit the description", one begins to wonder if there is some generic, composite profile of the African Canadian criminal. The pattern of these stories tends to be either: no description given or a description that is so universal, it literally could fit 50% of African Canadians who live in an urban setting.

"I was walking in a plaza and they (police) pulled up on me and said I fit the description of somebody and asked me for i.d. . So I said no. I know my rights. They can't tell me nothing. I took classes about that at school. They ask me for my

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

name and I tell them, no, Am I under arrest? And he doesn't say nothing...When you know your rights you actually know what you can do and what you can't do. You also know what they can do and what they can't."

(Claude, 16)

"I was chilling (on the street) and there was a drug raid. Ten minutes after the raid since there was me and two friends the cops came. (Shabbah and his friends were crossing a school parking lot at night). They did a 360 in front of us and pulled their guns and said 'Do you know what happened with the drug raid...Start feeling up our pockets. They found a bag with sugar in it from my candies and were like 'This is cocaine! Get down! Give us your names! It was horrible. They put us up against the wall. We were like, 'It's sugar. Smell it'. He smelled it and he was like 'do you know those people over there? Why are you looking over there? We were like, 'we're walking home.' He was like, 'you're lying to us. Give us your names, your student cards and all this stuff, 'cause they thought we were dealing for the guy. They let us go and then they made up a weird excuse that we were loitering and next time they catch us they would give us a ticket."

(Shabbah, 14)

Shabbah is currently awaiting court hearing in an incident where, he says, a group of African Canadian youth had a face-off with some white youth who were distributing hate literature. The African Canadian youth did not hit the whites, he says, but they "yelled at and cursed" them for what they were doing. In the melee that followed, he says, police hit the African Canadian youth with batons. They later came to his school, arrested him and "dragged (him) out in 'cuffs" because some of the white youth claimed that he tried to assault them and rob them. Shabbah adds that the white youth claimed that as the African Canadian youth ran they stole their property. He says the items "mysteriously" appeared in the white youth's lockers the following day and that the white youth admitted that he and his friends never stole the items.

"Sometimes people give them the information ask for calmly. Sometimes they react. They get mad. They ask 'Why are you asking for i.d? What did I do wrong? They just give you an excuse like routine check, or you fit the description of somebody [who committed a crime]."

(John, 15)

"I was walking home from school and they (police) pulled up and started harassing me for no reason...said I fit the description of someone they were looking for. After that they fling me in the car, banged my head into the car trunk. One of them searched me and one used his thing (nightstick) and hit me in my head. I told (a community worker) and she told me to file a complaint but I never did. I don't like causing problems so I just left it alone.

"I'm not going to cooperate with them. When I see them and they ask me for help I say no and go about my business. Or I just ignore them. Some of my friends know them because they (the police in their area) beat them up before. A group of them come around here...drive around and try to pick on the kids. We know all their names, so when we see them we have to run from them like we are criminals. Even when we are playing ball and we see them, we just drop the ball and run. What kind of life is that? That's not the life I want to live. I have no charge or anything like that. But I have to run because they are going to beat me too. I don't want to get beaten by any police."

(Micah, recently accepted to university)

Power Play

In several interviews a kind of unspoken power-play seems to take place between young Blacks and the police.

"Police told my friend that they (the police) are the biggest gang in the city...' Cause, just like a gang, they could stop you. Nothing you can do about it 'cause if you take one down, there's always going to be someone else to replace them."

(Justin, 18)

During one discussion Joseph stares off in the distance, seemingly unconcerned with his friend's spirited wish that the police would just "go away" and leave them alone. "I hate them", Joseph finally says out of nowhere. "I wish I could snuff one of them". Joseph is 14 years old.

In the same neighborhood, Sam says he was standing on his ground floor balcony talking with a group of friends. Six officers in unmarked cars who patrol the area around the apartment buildings came over to check out what was being discussed.

"He said to me that because I'm on the balcony that's my side. But if I jump over my balcony I'm on his side, I'm in his world. So I said, it's your world? He's like, 'Yes'. I'm like, who's ruler? He goes 'Us'. So I'm like, so what if there's nobody to rule? Who you gonna rule? So he didn't have nothing to say. He just kept quiet. So I said, just shut up and get out of my face."

Shielded by his balcony rails, Sam feels the balance of power shift. For now.

Conversations with a police officer as well as workers at the recreational centre in Sam's neighborhood clearly illustrate a challenge facing the neighbourhood. The area is well positioned to be an outlet for those who wish to sell and to buy drugs. One African Canadian police officer points to what he says are wealthy 'white boys' who drive by in their SUV's, grab their purchases and leave. A community worker shows the interviewer the favourite spot for such deals, an area tucked away behind the centre, therefore out of range of cameras. In this parking lot, police wait and watch: 'tagging', 'clocking' and giving Blacks 'The Look', residents say. Doing their jobs, police say.

Power play between African Canadian residents and police in their neighbourhoods reflects the community's fine line between its desire to protect personal privacy and its desire to maintain community safety. One community worker feels she needs to protect youth at play in the local recreational centre from random probing by police. She says the centre's management has had to put their foot down on police attempts to randomly walk in and scan the youthful participants. The interviewer has heard a similar story in another community centre across town, where police also wanted to scan the registry. The worker in this case offers the police that if they are after a specific individual she will be happy to bring them to the police.

While the workers are worried about crime in their area, they are equally worried that the centre will no longer be seen as a safe place for youth to hang out away from criminals and from police questioning. The youth worker says that she told police: "Unless you identify who you are looking for, I'm sorry, I'm not allowing you to come into my gym because there is a certain level of intimidation between you and these youth."

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

[Police do have the right to enter a public building in search of an individual suspected of breaking the law. Randomly entering a community centre `just to see' if there are any lawbreakers among participants, however, generates bad feelings in the community. On the other hand, waiting at the door while a youth worker goes in to get a suspect could be dangerous if the person resists. One interviewee suggests that community centres and the police in such cases should negotiate their working relationship, in the spirit of mutual respect.]

Breaking the Spirit

From the perspective of African Canadians interviewed, breaking the Black person's spirit is the ultimate show of police power.

"It's like they want someone to go to jail or something. They're hating on African Canadian people." (Julius, 13)

"They ask stupid questions...like you know of any African Canadian people who sell drugs. I said I don't rat on my friends."

(Cruise, 12)

"When they have African Canadian people in the back [of the cruiser] they wind down the window so everyone can see their face."

(Omar, 14)

"Right now African Canadians are trying to take over the world in sports and everything. It's like they (the police) feel threatened."

(Gill 14)

Fourteen-year-old Joyce says her 20-year-old brother has not been the same since the day police blocked him off with their cars as he walked with his friends, asking if he knew a 15-19 year-old wearing black pants and a red top similar to his. They told him he looked familiar. Her brother, she says, decided to give the police "attitude" for asking him these questions. He and his friends swore at the police, telling them they are racist, that they didn't like African Canadians and that they should get out of their neighborhood. The resulting showdown landed the young men in jail for a week.

Joyce says her brother has not been the same since his release. He refuses to leave the house. But staying home is no solution either. "He never used to give so much attitude".

[We use Joyce's story not to condone her brother cursing the police and giving them `attitude', but to illustrate the rage and sense of invasion some African Canadians feel when police ask what in other situations would be seen as a valid question as part of an investigation. We saw this anger among other interviewees—and not just those from inner cities. Those who experience this rage say they are reacting to what they see as police assumption that `they all look the same'.]

Chapter 3

WHERE PROFILING HAPPENS

The recent controversy around racial profiling has tended to focus on motorists. The interviews indicated, however, that encounters with the police during which people feel targeted and profiled can take place in a variety of settings. Some examples follow:

‘Walking to the Store to Buy Bleach’

“One Sunday I was going to the store to buy bleach. Two cop cars were coming into our complex. You would not think that a cop car could drive where I thought this car was going. So as a concerned tenant with children I kind of did a [double take]. Upon doing so the police officer [who sat in the car] called out ‘Hey you’. I’m thinking that as a (grown) woman going to the store he couldn’t be talking to me. So I kept on my merry way. Then I heard ‘Hey you’ again...I turned around and saw two cops sitting in their cruiser directing me over. I walked over and said, Can I help you gentlemen?”

“One said, ‘what are you doing?’ I said I’m going to the store to buy bleach. They started to interrogate me, asking a lot of questions. I asked them for their badge number, because I’m not no fool. I know the law. I asked them for the number of their car and their response was ‘look at the side of the vehicle’.

“ I was so disgusted that day, I thought to myself, how could they treat someone like me –who was just going to the store to buy bleach—in the manner that they did? I thought about all of the incidents and all the stories I had heard from the youth. The youth kept saying ‘you just don’t understand’. That day, believe me, I understood as a female. Before I even got home with the bleach I stood at the side of the building and I just upchucked. I was so disgusted. I threw up at the thought of how I felt and [of] all the young men who have complained before me.”

(Daisy, 40ish)

Daisy used her personal connections with senior officers at the station to have the officers disciplined: this despite the officers’ claim that she “acted with a criminal mind and intention” because she was wearing blue (color of the Crips gang) and because she looked back when they entered the complex. A month later Daisy saw the officers in the same building complex, “harassing a young man”. She approached and introduced herself as a community worker and child and youth worker, asking if she could help to deal with the situation. The officers recognized her and asked, “Still got a chip on your shoulder?” She reported the incident again to the senior officer at the station. Daisy maintains that this was one of “many, many” incidents she has witnessed between police and African Canadians in the area.

On Your Own Property and in your Neighborhood

“A few weeks ago I was at my boy’s house...We were play fighting with his cousin. I guess a few people from their houses down the street called the police on us. Police came to the house and said that we were trying to kidnap the kid. They were putting on their gloves trying to frisk us. ”

(Tim)

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

"I was at my house (apartment)...a bunch of us chillin' and about (three) undercover cars see us and thought we were planning something...(They) came and make a big scene at my house...saying my friends are drug dealers, whatever. I live with my parents...and I almost got kicked out of the house. One of my friends started arguing with them and the police said to him, he's lucky he had his kid in his hands or he would see what would happen to him..."

"The police told him to put his kid down and come over the balcony. But we told him no, don't go, because they looked like they wanted to beat him up because he was telling them to leave...They said they had a hint that something was going to happen...because of the way we dressed...and that something is going on in the building and they assumed it's us."

"After that they said they are going to make it a project every day. From that day, every day you see them. They drive past in their car, they peep in my house."

Micah

"You have people who just can't sleep at night. They get haunted or ... bored. So they go out for a walk or to get a cup of coffee and sit down a bit. They may leave their house at 11 o'clock and return home at one o'clock...Then they get stopped. Many times I get taken to the station, I don't even have my wallet on me...They take me to the station so they can identify me"

(Winston, late 20s)

In Front of Your Apartment Building

In one neighbourhood, African Canadian community workers describe the "very good relationship" between the landlords, security companies and police. They feel while this might indeed be necessary in order for effective control of those who threaten the community with drugs and other illegal activity, the three-way relationship should in fact be a four-way one that includes law-abiding members of the community. Failure to do this, they say, makes the community feel suspect and under siege, in addition to being victimized by the illegal activity itself. Pat, a community organizer, points out that "there are a lot of good kids; there are also a few bad apples, but there are more good kids than bad apples".

The community contains a mixture of privately rented and government subsidized housing and residents complain bitterly about treatment by security guards hired by the landlord. Security, however, forms only one third of what these residents see as an unholy alliance of sorts. The landlord gives security wide powers to involve the police in incidents that residents think could sometimes be resolved through simple negotiation. The African Canadian parents at the focus group know that police have no choice but respond to calls from the security guards that patrol the area. When police arrive, however, they don't feel that they are listened to equally when their version of events differs from that of the security officers.

" We are not all bad apples. People turn us into bad apples. We don't do nothing. They just label us to do stuff. You go to get a job you can't even get a job because they're going to look at you."

(Coby, 18)

On the Street in Plain Open View

Winston, who lives in the outskirts of town has had many encounters with the police: in his neighborhood as he walked along the street; in front of a coffee shop where he was taken to the bathroom and searched. He says he has done some “foolishness” as a teenager that landed him in jail. He now works for the government. Pencil thin, Winston is in his late 20s but looks more like a teenager.

“About two summers ago I was walking (along a major street in a downtown area) with my girlfriend, who was pregnant. She asked me to carry her bag for her while she did something because the bag was too heavy...I got stopped because my girlfriend was White. Police asked for my identification and I refused to (give it to them). I asked the officer what was the problem. He told me that he doesn’t know me. I’m like, ‘well that’s good. I don’t know you either. But you don’t see me coming after you for your i.d.’

“He got more and more intense but I refused to give him my i.d. My girlfriend told him it was her bag that I was carrying and she had her i.d. in the bag. But (the officer) said that was irrelevant, he wanted to see my i.d...He said I fit the description of a purse snatcher, which was pretty lame to me.

“We started exchanging words. He didn’t like the way I (hissed) my teeth at him, but I was upset over being pulled over first thing in the morning on the way to the dentist. He grabbed me and threw me in a corner next to a little store where no one could see. He started choking me and calling me all words in the book...He called me a nigger. He called me a piece of shit. He called me an f...ing liar.

“When I showed him my i.d. that still wasn’t good enough for him. He still continued to choke me. There were people passing by and saw everything but I couldn’t get anybody’s name to testify on my behalf. (The officer) kept asking me what am I going to do now, mouthpiece?...I love when I catch you guys like this, meaning us niggers.

“Before he choked me he called for back-up. When back-up arrived they told me some nonsense about the reason he choked me was for his protection, because of my previous convictions I had with the law and he didn’t know if I was armed...It was in summer time and I had on shorts and a tank top...

“I have a very short temper. I was going to punch him but my girlfriend told me not to. I didn’t want the stress on her...I told him put down that gun and that badge and what are you? Just another person with no power...I told him if I was a purse-snatcher I would be running...

““He must have been a rookie cop as he looked younger than me. He was just basically abusing his power because he had a badge and a gun...I said I am a fellow (government) employee. I might not be up in rank as he is but I am a government employee. They said how would my employer feel if they knew the trouble I was causing? I said I wasn’t causing any trouble, I was just walking to the dentist...The reason I didn’t hand him my i.d. in the first place was because of the way he approached me...I could have had family drive by and see me in handcuffs and wondered what am I doing again. Then word would get back to my mother and father that I am back in trouble with the law.

“You treat me like shit, I’ll treat you like shit. What goes around comes around. It all boils down to respect. If you talk to someone in a pleasant tone or manner you will get a response in a pleasant tone or manner nine times out of 10...But if they come with a tone of voice like I have to answer them then I won’t answer them...I’ll just keep walking.

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

"I called the supervisor (at the station later) and he didn't do anything. He said I deserved it because if I had given my i.d. in the first place none of this would have happened."

Driving

Inner City Youth

"I was coming from my friend's apartment [waiting for my friend, who had just gone to the store]. The cops came behind me and turned on their siren and the car wasn't even moving..."

"They were like, step out of the car. I stepped out and gave them my G1". The police informed Coby that he was not supposed to be driving without a licenced driver. Coby acknowledged that he knew. "He goes, go around to the back of the building. We went and then he goes, 'So where's the weed?' Then he goes, "as a matter of fact I don't want the weed just want to know if you have crack on you or if you have a gun' I go What? No!

"It was the winter time and I had on my jacket and he goes, 'you know what, I don't believe you. Then he grabbed me and said, 'get out the car'. Then he searched me and searched my friend too. Then after that he gave me two tickets one for driving with the G1 and the next one because I couldn't find the insurance for the car. ..They didn't even show up in court so they dropped all the charges.

"[Another time] I was driving with a licenced driver. I made a left turn. There was another car behind me then the light turned yellow. The cop came down on me and told me to step out the car." Coby did and the officer told him that he had run the red light. Coby responded that this could not be possible, that if anything the car behind him (driven by a white person but was not stopped) would have been the one who did it. "Then he called his supervisor. They looked at the car and at our address and then they go, 'You guys shouldn't be dressing like that. Now when I drive I don't even drive with a hat because they always pull us over. They go like, 'Why are you guys wearing hats? Are you in a gang? You guys have any tattoos? I go 'No'. You guys been in trouble with the law?"

(Coby, 23)

The police ordered Coby and his friends to step out the car so they could search it. They asked them if they had guns in the car. Again no. The police searched his friend's bag, to find out, they said, if he had guns in it. "After they searched the car they asked, 'so where are you guys going?' They told the police. The police then told Coby that they knew he was at a particular night club on a night when there was a shooting. Did he have any information about the shooting? "He goes, if you give me information I can rip up the ticket and let you go". He had me standing like that in the road. Coby said he didn't. The police gave him the ticket. Some time later (after two detectives had come to Coby's home to question him further about the shooting) Coby saw the officer again. After he was satisfied that Coby did not know anything about the shooting, the officer said he would not show up for the court hearing.

Businessman

Herman, 27, has gotten fed up of being questioned by police while driving his own vehicle—they always ask where he got the money to buy the car--so he now drives only a vehicle registered in his mother's name: not that this helps, because now police question him on whose car it is and, when told, on whether his mother knows he has the car. His mother holds a high-level job in a financial institution. He feels that questions such as these, or asking whether his driver's licence is valid when they have it in their hand, are meant to "antagonize".

He describes the car he had before as “kind of flashy (with) a lot of stereo in it”.

“I was driving my friend’s truck. He’s a white guy. So (in seating arrangement) it’s African Canadian guy, white guy [and in the back] African Canadian guy white girl. When they pulled us over they asked me for information and the African Canadian guy in the back for information. Nobody else...The white guys had no seatbelt on.”

Herman does not resist when police stop him.

“There’s nothing you can really do, which means you are just rolling the dice. If you want to give them a bit of extra lip because you feel brave, well...You get used to it. I’m to the point where, if he’s going to follow me, I’m just going to stop...It’s to the point where they are just waiting for you to do something so they pull you over. I don’t even look. I just hand them the stuff by the time they get to the window...It’s not worth it to me, because I know if you give them reason they will harass you...check through my car, call for back-up if I’m disrespectful to them... I know all my stuff’s up to date; they have no reason to pull me over. I wasn’t speeding, they didn’t give me [a] ticket. It’s just harassment, to be honest.

Herman thinks his rights are being violated by these random stops, but says they are now “second nature”. He recently got stopped three times in one day: once because he was using a 10-day permit (he says he was within the 10-day range); once because the officer said he ran a red light, a claim Herman denies. He was not charged. The third time was a “routine check”.

Herman says his brother’s girlfriend, who is white, was shocked when her boyfriend was recently randomly stopped. “She couldn’t believe it! Just the way she explained (the incident), she was so shocked. She was like wow!” Another white friend was driving with her boyfriend—she was the driver—was flabbergasted when after being stopped by police, her boyfriend, not she, was asked for identification. The officer apparently said he wanted to know who the boyfriend was.”

The interviewer later spoke with Herman’s brother’s girlfriend. She said when the siren went off, she asked her boyfriend what he had done. He said, nothing: he’s African Canadian. “I said no, he’s gotta have a reason.” The officer took both licences but gave the girlfriend hers back, then asked the man whether he’s before the courts for anything. Although the man said no, the officer took his licence back to the cruiser to check it. He returned and simply handed the licence back. The woman said she had never seen anything like this before.

Herman’s mother joins the conversation and tells of a time the police came to her door because someone had hijacked a car with a baby inside. Her son was sleeping, she said. Asked why would the police come to her door, she says she didn’t know: it certainly wasn’t her son who stole the van. Her son does not have a criminal record.

As the conversation continues more and more stories pour out. Herman describes one particular incident when his friend was stopped. He handed his papers through the window but did not roll the window all the way down. The police ordered him to do so, but he refused, insisting they check his papers because they were all in order. Instead the officer called for backup, proceeding to “rip apart his car”. They found nothing.

African Canadian Police Officer

“I was driving along a suburban road going east. A police car was going west. The policeman just looked over at me and he made a u-turn and stopped me. The car that was ahead of me stopped because he saw what was happening.

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

The (officer) approached me and asked for my drivers' licence. He said, 'Do you realize how fast you were going?' I said I was driving the speed limit. He said no, I was going 90km. I said to him. 'How could I be going 90? How fast was that car ahead of me going?' "He said, 'I don't care how fast he was going, you were going 90.' So I said, how do you know I was going that speed? He said he had me on radar. I said, let me see your radar. I went over to the car and he had 30km on the radar. The speed limit was 60. I said, listen, I know how radar works as I have done radar work before, so tell me what you mean by the 30 on the screen there? He asked me where I worked. I told him I was a police officer.

"He said, 'Let me see your tin (police badge).' I said no, I'm not going to show you my badge because I don't want you to change your mind because I told you this...I told him that if I was going faster than the speed limit I would be flying past the man ahead of me...He gave me back my licence. He didn't say anything else."

(Andrew, police officer, early 50s)

In the Suburbs

Paul is a 23-year-old suburbanite whose father holds a high level job in a multi-million dollar firm. Few law enforcement officers will miss Paul's steely sarcasm when, after stopping him as he drives his late model BMW—a gift from his Dad—or his father's current model Cadillac, they proceed to ask him whose car it is. Well, Officer, he thinks, you have the papers in your hand, whose car do you think it is? But Paul is too polite and well brought up to swear at or insult the officer. His rock-solid self-esteem leads him to impatience, rather than rudeness. He's got a fledgling business to run. But his disdain is palpable.

He lives in a neighbourhood that is home to wealthy people. The parking lot at the school he attended is populated with high-end cars and other luxury vehicles. In his driveway one will find a current model Mercedes 500 series, a current model Cadillac Escalade, a Mercedes 350 series and a late model BMW. Paul wears a curly hairdo that befits the artist that he is. His father asked him once to wear a hat when driving because he worried that police would target him because of his hair. Paul refused.

"I explained to him that if I was going to get pulled over because of the way I looked, then that's unfortunate. I guess I will have to sacrifice my time by getting pulled over, as opposed to conforming to society."

An articulate young man, Paul carries the air of one for whom symbols of wealth hold no awe. He found it "weird" when one of his friend's mother refused to let him drive the family Mercedes to school because she did not want the teachers to think that he had more money than they did. Paul is allowed to drive any of the cars for which he is covered by insurance. Even teachers, he said, used to be "upset" with him for driving his parents' luxury vehicles to school.

Paul gets pulled over frequently when he's driving one of his parents' cars. He has no problem with this, since a check of the licence plate shows it is registered to a female or to a male in his 50s. He figures the "mature" way to handle such pull-overs is to comply. He finds it interesting, however, that police would find it necessary to check the plates of the car he is driving as he passes by.

Driving his own BMW, however, is another story. As with inner city youth the reason usually given for the pull-over is that it's a 'routine check'.

"When they don't have anything to say (as to why they pulled him over) they just say 'Just pulling you over routinely,' which they can do. But I need to know why. I do know why. Supposedly I have this look and a lot of urban youth steal vehicles, so they feel the urge to pull over every urban youth who drives a nice car." Paul's use of the term 'urban youth' is a euphemism for 'African Canadian urban youth', since so far as he knows his white friends do not have the same complaint."

At the Store

"Five of us...went to the store to get some firecrackers. The store owner (who was at the back of the store) called his friends...because he thought we were making trouble. We went outside. (The owner followed the youth outside the store). They said we took firecrackers. I even showed them my money. The firecrackers were over the counter, so none of us could have [taken it]. We were walking towards McDonalds when the police came. We kept walking. The car [sped] up and blocked us...Then they tried to charge all of us for mischief.

(Chris, 16)

Filing Reports

Coby went to the local police station to complain of the security guards posting his picture when he had done nothing wrong. *"They were like, Oh I can't expect better because the building I live in is a drugs building and it's all drug dealers who live there. So basically, he's telling me that I'm a drug dealer."*

In Search of Drugs and Guns

"White people have the best weed." (Herman, 27)

"They [police] are not showing up in court [to defend] charges against me. What they are really looking for are guns and drugs." (Dwayne, 21)

In *Crisis, Conflict and Accountability*, documents on racial profiling in the U.S. and Britain, show a link, particularly in the U.S., between profiling and the war on drugs. [See also *We Are Not Alone: Police Racial Profiling in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom*]. Government and police organizations link the proliferation of street level drugs (and the guns that enforce the drug trade) to Black communities, justifying –and sometimes directing--a kind of 'by any means necessary' approach to their fight against drugs. There are strong feelings among African Canadians, however, that a 'by any means necessary' approach encourages police officers to target and harass anyone who fits their profile of a drug dealer.

Asked whether he believes random police requests for i.d. violate his rights, Drew, 16, says no. "Some people are on the streets selling (drugs), you don't know what they are doing. They (police) can ask you questions." Asked if he believes police cross the line with inappropriate questioning, Drew again responds, No, he doesn't think so.

"Me and Coby were walking home one night and we see a police in the corner just standing. We were wearing African Canadian hoods and grey hoods. The police officer ran up on us with his gun drawn ... We just stood up 'cause we were thinking he was going to do something to us. He's like, 'Assume the position. Spread your legs'. He searched us. He told us they were looking for someone in the area. They all stood up (a) next man at the back with their guns and he

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

was pleading for his life saying 'You guys are going to shoot me! You guys are going to shoot me! As a matter of fact give me your badge number. (Freeway, late teens)

"They didn't want to give their badge number. Then they ran up on us and went 'Don't move! Don't move!'. I'm like, 'What's going on?'
(Coby)

The officers searched Coby and Freeway and let them go.

"Me and my friend were walking with our coach. Police said there were kids with a gun. They tripped me and my friend and put shotguns in our backs. We weren't the guys but we're Black and they said two Black kids [had the gun]...After they let us go 'cause the coach talked to them. That's why I hate police. I don't talk to them. They're racist. They only go after Black people. Life goes on though."
(Hawk, 12)

"I was walking about six o'clock and like four undercover cops came up to me and said, 'Oh, regular pat down strip search. They put their hand in my pockets going up and down [my body], pulling my pants against my body checking to see if I had any drugs."
Shabbah, 14

Chapter 4

IMPACT OF PROFILING

In its report, *Paying the Price*, the Ontario Human Rights Commission provides extensive documentation on the impact that racial profiling has on those who experience it. The report quotes criminologist Scott Wortley: "To argue that racial profiling is harmless, that it only hurts those who break the law, is to totally ignore the psychological and social damage that can result from always being considered one of the 'usual suspects'". *Paying the Price* captures the gamut of emotions among victims, from fear, guilt and resentment, to humiliation, changed dress and behaviour patterns and mistrust of all institutions.

Interviews among African Canadians reveal all these emotions at work among those whose experiences with police leave them feeling profiled. The impact of profiling on Blacks, however, also bears a unique flavour, given the way many in society view this particular group as a whole. It is important to understand this in order to grasp the significance of interviewee's accounts.

When African Canadians feel that they are being profiled by police as anti-social wrongdoers, the sting is all the more sharp because they see themselves portrayed in the same way on T.V., in books and in movies. They become confused by what one African American author John Wideman describes as society's "deadly ambivalence" towards them. They are rewarded when they fulfil the machismo and physicality that make them sports heroes and hip-hop and fashion icons, yet frowned on when they insist in being treated as 'just one of the guys'.

The young man decked out in uber-cool baggy pants and ice [flashy jewellery] so slavishly copied by non-Blacks is shocked to realize that what on others' is seen as a fashion statement, is on him seen as a signal indicating that he is a thug, gunman or social threat. The successful businesswoman is shocked when she receives treatment she would normally associate with 'bitches and hos' of rap video fame. The father who exhorts his son to seek an education is devastated when a seemingly simple encounter in school lands his son on the curb under the discretionary powers of the Safe Schools Act. He is doubly enraged when he is unable to enjoy the BMW his own education yields, as he becomes fed up with being stopped in his middle class neighbourhood. The ambitious single mother who flees the city to 'give her children a better life' is shocked when she hears herself say "Those police, I have no respect for them any more", as she watches her 18-year-old son and his friends struggle to contain their rage over a negative encounter with police.

A Sense of Injustice

"You can't really do anything about it because as hard as it sounds, it's the white man's world. Things may probably change in the future.

(Claude, 16)

The sense of despair works hand in hand with the sense of injustice, a feeling that this was not fair, but what are you going to do?

"We were playing ball one day and there were some white guys. They were smoking and drinking beer. [The police] walked right past the white guys and came to us. They only made them pour the beer out. They didn't even ask their

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

name or nothing. Most times when they see African Canadian people with alcohol, they confiscate it or take them in. They're going to harass you more. African Canadian people are always at a disadvantage. White people get off easy.

"I've seen white people talk to the cops worse than Black people would even think of cussing off the police like that and they don't even get treated like that...It's ridiculous! They are not getting drawn down for anything. I know people in jail for doing nothing...they were just at the wrong place at the wrong time and the odds were against them" (Steve 24)

"It's Not What They Say..."

"Sometimes there'll be some nice cops who say 'Hi, how're you doing'. They tell you to go home or whatever the case may be. If they say how is your day or whatever [I'll react politely]. Be nice to me and I'll be nice to you."

(John, 15)

"One time we were parked in the school parking lot waiting for someone. It was pretty late. The police came by. These guys were nice. They didn't give us any hassle. They just asked us for ID and told us next time if we want to wait we should wait outside, not inside the school parking lot. We were loitering in the parking lot. We didn't know we were not supposed to be there but he told us. We said alright and. ..moved.

(Justin 17)

"Mine was a situation where there were two nice police officers. They stopped us. They thought we were loitering and one of us was in trouble with the law. But they never took us in or nothing. They just sat down there and talked with us for a couple minutes. Just conversation like you'd have with anyone else. Then they said we should go home [and we did]."

(Jack, 17)

"My most fond memory of interaction with the police was a ...pleasant one. Nine of us were outside in front of the recreation center just talking. There was a cruiser going down the road and there was a cruiser right in front of us. The...guy was just talking to us just cool and calm. He asked 'How come you guys are out so late...you know, nice conversation. The car that was driving along the road was going to turn in and this guy gave him the hand signal like, keep going and he just left right after. No real problems."

"I think the routine checks when they stop us and say 'What's going on, how are you guys doing' I don't really find that too wrong because it keeps the streets safe. If they say hi and someone says F-off then you know that not someone who should be on the streets right now." Rudy has heard youth "once in a while" respond "get out of here or F-off to officers. "I find that rather ignorant. If they say how're you doing its just like a normal person walking down the road. It's just that they're in uniform. They're on the job. Just say hi back."

(Rudy, 18)

The following exchange took place in an interview with Rudy and a group of friends.

- Justin:** Police go over the line when they ask you where are you coming from. Or when they try to be sarcastic like, How're you doing there buddy?
- Rudy:** Well why [get upset?]? Just answer them politely and be sarcastic back.
- Justin:** We do that, but sometimes it's annoying.
- Rudy:** OK, it may be annoying, but they are just doing their job

- Theo:** When they catch on that we are being sarcastic then we're just asking for more 'cause they have the authority to put their power over you.
- Rudy:** What can they do to you?
- Julius:** Anything.
- Rudy:** They can't do nothing to you. If they are sarcastic you be sarcastic back. You have [your rights.] Are you wanted? You can say whatever you want so long as it's polite.

The conversation rages with Justin agreeing that "the police can do anything", since they have "the higher authority". Rudy declares, "I don't believe that for a second...I'm too smart for that. They can't get me if I did nothing. [They] can beat me up if they want but everyone around this neighborhood knows that I'm not the kind of guy who goes around and starts throwing fists so its not a big conflict".

"If (cops) want our cooperation they should talk to us in a proper manner, not like we are criminals. That's not right".
(Micah)

Do-Rags and Baggy Pants

Youth in the interviews held conflicting feelings about whether they should refrain from wearing the ubiquitous 'do-rags' and baggy pants, an urban uniform of sorts. Some feel that wearing these clothes attract police attention and by extension, targeting. Others feel they should, like everyone else, be free to wear whatever they want.

"While it [is] acknowledged that not all teenagers who hang out dressed in baggy pants and wear do-rags are bad, assumptions are often made to the detriment of all".
(Michael)

"I know for a fact that if I walked around in some tight jeans and some weird shirt [and] funky colours in my hair nobody would harass me. Everybody would look at me like I'm a fruit. But as soon as you put on a baggy jeans (sic), hats and stuff...once you have a bandana on, they're jumping at you...They [haven't learned that these are just clothes. They just do it regardless."

"You could be a straight A student, never been in trouble, that's how you like to dress. They still harass you, doesn't matter what you wear."
(Jacob, 17)

"There was a fight one day at school and I was just passing by the fight. How did I end up in court from passing by a fight? I told the officer I wasn't involved in the fight, he said he didn't care. The lawyer told me he said look at how big I am. The lawyer [himself] looked at me and went 'Holy, you're huge!'"
(Steve)

"I could be walking gangsta and you could be walking in a suit. I could have a book bag coming from summer school. You could have a briefcase with drugs in it. Who knows? But somehow how they target it is through the bandana, the shoes, the jacket. This is what attracts the cops. That's like their mission. When they go out there, their mission is to look at people, look for the bling bling...It would take more (proof) for them to approach a young Black male in a suit and with a briefcase in his hand."
(Anthony, 18)

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

Eighteen year-old Sylvia lives in what would be considered one of the city's 'inner city' areas. A walk through her neighbourhood reveals a mixture of low-income housing, a mall and further up on the same major artery attractive apartment buildings and single family homes. For the interview Sylvia wears a kinder, gentler version of the urban streetwear that populates the mall in her neighbourhood. Sporting a pale blue baseball-style shirt and Phat Farm footwear, Sylvia asserts that she can't imagine a situation in which she will have a negative encounter with the police, pointing out, "I'm pretty reserved."

What would she do if a police car stopped her, even inappropriately?

"One thing I wouldn't do, I wouldn't start yelling at them. Not to generalize, but sometimes African Canadian people overreact and want to put on our accents. I know that white people [consider] that ignorant so I wouldn't do that. Even today I was speaking to somebody and they said, 'You sound very Valley'. I was like, well you know what, I speak English. I'm from Canada.

"I think that African Canadian people feel like they have to be hard. To look hard. They are walking like they have 100lbs on their shoulder. The do-rags right above the eyebrows to make them look fierce. They have to be angry. Sometimes African Canadian people are trying to be ghetto. "They are proud to be ghetto. They're proud that their life looks hard 'cause then they can say I survived this or I survived that. "They are talking about reality. Well my reality is I am going to university. [My friend's] reality is that, you know, I'm just going to chill."

(Sylvia, 18)

"Sometimes some of us can be really ignorant...We degrade ourselves sometimes, exterminating people, robberies. Sometimes we are stuck in our ways. Like I was born ghetto and I'm going to stay ghetto... If you go around with that mentality you're going to get a negative feedback [from the police] naturally. They'll tag you. "Say you go out on the road, the way you walk, the way you present yourself will attract their attention. Sometimes the way you attract people is how they'll judge you...I'm not going to blame it all on the cops. ..Some of us overdo it...I blame at least 10% on the kids..."

(Anthony, 18)

Anthony's take on the role of dress in attracting negative police treatment is not shared by all. Screech and Jersey are youth outreach workers in an inner city area. Jersey agrees that youth attract attention with their dress. Screech, in describing his own negative experiences with police stresses, however, that he does not look ghetto. On this particular night he is wearing a plain t-shirt and fitted pants. Their friend Zach is 31 years old. His encounter happened one morning on his way to work. Zach wears a suit and works for a company for which a picture i.d. is required.

Crossing the area between two buildings, Zach says he came upon a police car parked, watching him. It was in the winter. "Hey you, come here", the officer called out. "I'm late for work", Zach responded. "I want you to come over here now. Why don't you want to talk? Did you do something wrong?" the officer repeated. Zach came over. The officer proceeded to quiz Zach on where he was going and even after being shown the card he was not satisfied. "Are you keeping out of trouble?" "Why are you asking me that", Zach says he responded. "Is it because I'm Black?" ""Why do you guys always use that?" the officer retorted. He proceeded to run Zach's information through his computer. "I told him, that's why the papers are writing about you guys. Here I am, a productive citizen and you are still harassing me".

"Sometimes it's not bitterness (against the police), it's the lifestyle that [young African Canadians] live. Someone from the ghetto, they will be caught up in their ways. They are not trying to listen to what the cops have to say. What the cops have to say is not going to feed them, it's not gonna put food on the table. It's not gonna protect them. It's not gonna have much effect."

(Anthony, 18)

"(One of my friends who would be one of those who would be targeted (because of his dress and mannerisms), he just thought it (the police talk) was crap. For him it's still 'I hate the police. I hate the police.'"

(Sylvia, 18)

"If I have braids in my hair they say he is a thug or whatever. If you chill out in front of your own building they say you are loitering, you can't stay there."

(Coby, 18)"

So when, for example, Suzy asked police why pictures of her son are on the wall of the security office when the youth had committed no crimes and is not a threat to the community, police respond that security have the right to do so if it is according to their policy.

"My son is not a child molester. He's not a rapist. He has no criminal record. So I wanted to know why his picture is on the wall. The police said that some security go about their things differently. This thing stresses me out mentally and physically because I don't know what's going to happen the next time I come home."

Gerard, who works in the community in which Suzy lives explains: *"If you [mess with] security guards you are risking your housing. But the police are telling the security guards to get photo i.d.s of whoever is loitering. They suspect them as being drug dealers so they take the pictures and stick them up inside their offices."*

Another African Canadian community worker, Pat, stresses that the youth in her apartment are being "set up (by security guards) for intimidation by the police..." She says that security guards from her apartment building provide pictures and other information gleaned from access to tenants' files to the police about youth they claim (but have not proven) to be involved in criminal activity, such as drug dealing. Police are then able to target these youth.

"Security ...makes the job easier [for the police]. "

The residents say the relationship between landlord, security and police also works in the other direction to the benefit of security as well.

"Some of the security (guards) are very well aware of charges that kids have had through the criminal justice system... How do they know this information? As a result, it becomes easier to evict the families of the charged youth."

"There are other incidents where the kids are just hanging out [in front of their building]—the kids are very stylish, the same way you'd see kids dressed in Rosedale, Forest Hill or whatever—and the police just drive up to them and start asking questions without just cause. As adults who know better and are informed we know that we don't need to answer questions that are not required."

(Pat, community worker)

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

"It makes you feel like a bloody criminal, which I no longer am. I never was a criminal either. I mean, I had run-ins with the law before...but every time I have something that looks suspicious they have to pull me over? Right now I can leave here and I would probably get stopped. If I have my laundry in a black garbage bag, bet you any money I would get stopped.

(Winston, late 20s)

Myrtle, a 50ish year old downtown resident tells of seeing youth treated in a similar fashion by police.

Restricted Freedom of Movement

In doing their jobs law enforcement officers enter the shadowy world of criminals, criminal intent, guilt by association and plain association whether with a neighborhood, an apartment building, a mode of dress, a way of speech, even a look. It is crapshoot, instincts, gut-feel and good detective work. It's as much an art as it is a science. It's a world in which 'profiling' helps increase the odds of landing one's target: whether a pedophile, an international arms dealer, a sniper or a small-time street dealer. The African Canadians interviewed made little distinction between being profiled on account of their race, or because they are viewed as possible criminals.

Several youth say they have been 'banned' by police-- although most of these cases involved security guards-- from visiting friends in certain apartment buildings. A ban under the Trespass Act means the person cannot come onto that property unless they can 'prove' the purpose of their visit. In the interviews banning was repeatedly mentioned as a sore spot. Proving legitimacy of a visit may include anything from having a letter of invitation—we were told of one such incident in a public housing complex—to being questioned or having security follow one to the apartment they say they are visiting.

When six detectives took Winston down-- "with six glocks pointed in my face"--in a coffee shop next door to the men's hostel where he was staying, it was clearly a case of mistaken identity. However, African Canadians like Winston find it difficult to adopt an 'Oh well' attitude to these kinds of incidents. They see them as the result of racial profiling.

"A lot of my friends are stopped, especially when they are with White girls. (Police) figure either (a) they are pimps (b) they are drug dealers or (c) you are a drug dealer and the White girl is holding the drugs for you. I have seen females harassed by police too...Black females, White females, Hispanic females...who mix with Black guys..."

"To me there is no difference between racial profiling and police (trying to sift out the bad guys). There are kids around here who have the hairstyle or the clothes but who never ever did a bad thing. You got people who are innocent church goers who have the hairstyle because it's the in thing and they do get pulled over...There's bigger crime being committed; people are dying on the streets but the police waste their time with nonsense."

(Winston, late 20s)

No Place to Play or to Dream

The feeling that they are treated differently by police even before they have done anything wrong is common among the interviewees. Speaking in reference to African American males, author John Wideman captures this sentiment with his words:"Black boys are cheated out of the sheltered, precious space of play, of making forgivable mistakes....". (Essence Magazine, November, 2003)

Sarah is bright, articulate 16-year-old, the type of normal looking teenager one would not expect to have strong feelings about the police. The interviewer does not probe into her socio-economic background, but there is something vaguely 'Valley Girl' about her.

"We all went to the talent show and we were at [a transit stop]. I guess some other people—two guys—tried to steal from the store. Why is it that every time we coloured people have gatherings...". She trails off and then continues her story. "Over 30 policemen came [and started to shout] 'Everybody out...!' Hitting them, tasing (electric shock) people. Some people had to go downstairs and they had to go outside the station. They said we were loitering, but we were waiting for our busses to go home. Some people were just minding their own business."

Asked how the incident made her feel Sarah responds: *"I thought gee, this is not slavery times, man. Grow up. Honestly, equality is a part of the Charter of Rights. We all deserve that. I know they are just doing their job, but sometimes they get out of hand when they see a lot of African Canadian people around. They need to settle down...Don't discriminate. Not all African Canadian people do crime."*

Sarah goes on further:

"You see when Caribana time comes, our culture times, the Friday before we have Yonge Street times when everybody gathers around to have fun. Why is it that every time white people have their cultural [events] no policemen are there. They just let them have a good time and go home. But when we have ours, honestly, that day, there was like 80 policemen pushing everybody off the road. There was no room for some of us to walk, know what I mean?"

"I swear, there were like policemen on bikes, 20 of them in a row. Then they were on motor bikes, on scooters, on horses, in cars and then in the trucks." Were people just hanging around Yonge St.? the interviewer asks. "They know that this is our time. It happens every year."

In our society freedom to play and dream might also include freedom to jog and get in shape in preparation to attend a U.S. university on a track and field scholarship. Community worker Irene has seen this dream crumble for one of her young charges.

"[He would] run in the night time. Two officers in a car pulled up on them (the young man and his running partners), shined the light on them...on a regular basis. They (police) pull into the community asking people for i.d., roughing people up for no apparent reason. These people are in a Metro Housing complex. There is no community centre...no basketball court, schools won't give them a permit anymore to run programs over there. There is nowhere for people to go more than to sit out around in the community."

"Every so often like clockwork they (police) pull in: 'What's your name? What unit do you live in? Why are you out here?' And if I'm a young person and I've not been educated that I should not answer....You're in my community. You have no right if I've not done anything wrong you have no right to come up and be hassling me. It's harassment. There's no nice way to look at it. That is harassment."

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

Forgivable Mistakes

To many young African Canadian males in particular, the notion that society will allow them, in John Wideman's terms, "forgivable mistakes" elicits a cynical look or a hearty laugh.

"In this country once you have been in trouble with the law it follows you for life".
(Winston, 29)

For Winston, it means that every time the police stop him and run his name through their computer, he is up for a search, he says, although his legal problems took place a long time ago.

"One time I was stopped because I fit the description of a Black man with his hair in a braid, six feet tall. I had nothing on me but they put the handcuffs on me after they ran my name through the computer. They said it was for their own safety. They went through my pockets to see if I had...any drugs, any contraband or any sharp objects. The only thing I had on me that was sharp was a pen in my pocket and my house keys.

"It makes me feel like I can't do nothing (right). I try to put the past behind me and they keep bringing up my past and I keep telling them that's the past. I finished my probation in 1998. I've paid my debts to society. But to them that's not enough.

'Unintentional Systemic Facilitation'

In its public positioning on police racial profiling, the Association of Black Law Enforcers points out that not only does profiling occur, it is being unintentionally supported by systems that allow "ineffective policy, training, mentoring and control mechanisms". According to one retired African Canadian officer, sometimes the support is not altogether unintentional, although good internal checks and balances have proven effective in correcting behaviours of individual police officers.

"Going back to the 70s there was one (senior officer)...who used to award guys for stopping Black people and summoning them. If they happen to be illegal and they get deported they (the officers) would get 16 hours in the book; eight hours for arresting them and putting them in jail...

"This (division) was a kind of training depot for a lot of young officers...When (the senior officer) left this division he went to (another) then (another) and tried to implement these things there, but that division had more mature people there and they refused to do what he wanted them to do.

"Behaviours are being challenged more today than in those years. (In those days) if you challenged anything you (would be) ostracized...For instance when I just came on the job a sergeant would say, 'Go get the WOPs (Italians). Then they would go from the Italians and say, 'Go get the niggers'. And then when we had an influx of Indians they would say, 'Go get the Pakis'.

"Systemic support means that a certain (senior officer) will target certain groups. Then you have that group that will do everything this person says. (Others) don't participate: but they won't report it. They don't want people to say 'What are you trying to do?' Or if they are targeting Black people they will say, 'What, are you a nigger lover or something?'

"(Senior police brass) will be defensive (about being accused of profiling.) He will want to defend his guys for people to say 'Oh yes, he's defending us.' He may not want to look bad like he doesn't know what is happening....Fairness will have to be seen to be taking place.

"Since Chief (Fantino) has asked for accountability,...I give him credit, there has been no shooting (of Blacks by Toronto police). A Black person hasn't been shot by a policeman in ages. The only shooting that is taking place is Black against Black. Before, every so often a gun is being drawn on a Black person".

(Retired Black police officer)

Resilience

"As a Black man- God bless my Mom and the people I have around me—(racial profiling) doesn't phase me for I know no man can keep me down. I've got confidence in whatever happens to 'cause I know, listen, they have nothing on me. In a sense I do feel some remorse though because I have served the system before as a cadet. I raised money for the police when they were trying to get their choppers for Toronto. I have pictures with [the Lieutenant Governor]. I felt a little bit of betrayal."

(Dwayne, 21, university student.)

CHAPTER 5

A Context for Solutions

In discussing racial profiling, some interviewees shared words of advice on how they feel the rift between the police and the African Canadian community can be healed. These are not systemic-based action steps. A comprehensive list of recommendations is included in Crisis, Conflict and Accountability. Community commentary on solutions is important, however, because whereas an institution can consider and even implement the most technically impressive recommendation, if such implementation does not take into account the thinking of its target, its success will be compromised. The interviewees offer a glimpse into different mindsets among African Canadians regarding the best way to address police racial profiling.

'We're are not all the Same'

The proponents of this approach argue that the way to stop racial profiling is to show to police that not all African Canadian youth are thugs and ne'er do wells worthy of being stopped and searched.

The 'we're not all the same' proponents feel that if they dress African Canadian youth in particular in 'decent' clothes, ideally fitted pants and shirts and take them to visit local police stations, the police will see that not all Black youth are police-hating criminals in the making, but that some of them are decent, respectable citizens, as demonstrated by their willingness to visit a police station and hold polite conversations with the officers on duty. After a few such sessions, officers will be so impressed, on street patrol they will be less inclined to bother Black youth.

Interviewees are inconclusive on the effectiveness of this approach to community policing. Some speak of "nice" police officers with whom they play sports and who treat them well in their communities; while others say that once they go outside of their community they did not feel safe. Some African Canadian police officers believe the answer lies in officers knowing their communities and, more importantly, making themselves available for their communities to know them. In two similar inner city communities where interviews were conducted at the local recreation center, at least some youth from the community with a police-youth recreational program had positive comments regarding the police. In the other community few if any youth had positive comments about the police: they see the police as they patrol, usually in cars.

'To Challenge is to Reject'

Members of this camp believe that a call for police accountability is a call to reject the office of policing in society. They cite everything from scripture to legal history to statements by law enforcement leaders. They do not distinguish between policing as an office, a system and an individual activity. Policing as an office relates to the need to maintain social order. Society needs policing to prevent anarchy. A policing system on the other hand is no different than any other system: education, judiciary or legal. Systems have legislated frameworks, as well as 'ways of doing things', some handed down from history. These ways may have worked well at one time but may need to be revised and updated to suit the realities of another time. More often than not, systems operate through invisible, unintentional supports that may even run contrary to the expressed

intention of the system itself. The challenge then is to reconcile the intent of the system with its reality.

Individuals within a system or an office vary across a wide spectrum. Some take the oath and other formal requirements of the office very seriously, while others put their own slant on what the oath means in reality. Some are unable to separate themselves from the system, while others buck the trend and do what they feel to be right even when others around them appear to be doing wrong.

The interviewer held a conversation with a young White auxiliary officer who had just passed his policing exam. He spoke of his personal struggle and perseverance to fulfil his dream of becoming a police officer. Encouraged through his Catholic faith, he vowed to take the sensitivity he had gained through his experience, into his job as a police officer. "I am who I am", he said. "No one can change who I am".

'Through Other People's Experiences'

At one police-community conference one presenter distinguished between people having their own lived experience with the police and living vicariously through the negative experiences of others. The implication was that vicarious experience with the police carries less validity than personal experience

We include few vicarious stories in this report, although during focus groups there was little difference between vicarious sentiments and those of interviewees who had direct encounters with the police. Vicarious experience seems to carry the same weight as lived experience, since it often forms the basis of what people talk about in their homes, their community centres, their churches places of worship and their one on one relationships. Good news spreads fast; bad news spreads even faster. In the end one finds a kind of "there but for the grace of God go I" empathy.

In one interview series, for example, the interviewer held conversations with community leaders who acknowledged that police sometimes target Blacks unfairly in their drive to reduce crime. Sure profiling happens, they say in a 'so-what' kind of attitude. They go on to describe incidents in which police have pulled over their congregants or even family members, seemingly at random. Lived experience does not cause this group to question the status quo, however. Instead we find among them the strongest voices for the 'keep your nose clean and decent clothes on' approach to addressing profiling.

On the other hand we interviewed another group of African Canadians who are clearly traumatized by ugly encounters friends or relatives have had with police. They are no less willing to work towards change, but they find it difficult to simply ignore these incidents. They yearn for answers and assurance that this type of incident won't happen again.

Take 11-year-old Mojo, for example, who says he hates the police. He says he has never had a personal encounter with the police, whether positive or negative, but police, in his view, "handcuff Black people for no reason." Asked what suggestions he has on how to build better relations with the police in his neighbourhood Mojo replies, "They shouldn't come around here". But, the interviewer suggests, the police are needed to keep the bad guys out of his community, to which Mojo responds, "there are no bad guys around here".

Clearly Mojo has a different view of his community-typically described as gun and drug ridden-- than the police do. The importance of the policing role in society is also falling on deaf ears.

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

'Forget the Past and Move On'

Those who express this solution skip or gloss over the diagnosis of racial profiling as a problem, preferring instead to move straight into solutions. Reasons range from pacifist philosophy to internalized racism, ego, misinformation, ignorance, yearning for systemic approval and, as mentioned before, fear that a demand for change and accountability equals rejection of police authority. One way proponents see 'moving on' is for African Canadians to 'present' a perfect package.

Twenty-one-year-old Dwayne symbolizes everything that one would recommend as an ideal package for a young African Canadian. Dwayne's pants are loose fitting, but not ankle grazing. His ebony skin and handsome features glisten against the white tank shirt he has just donned after playing basketball.

To many, Dwayne compares favourably to Dudley, quoted in an earlier chapter. Both young men grew up with single mothers who tried their best to inspire them to 'do something with their lives'. Dudley played basketball after school, Dwayne joined cadets, through which he had opportunity to travel to places outside of Ontario and even Canada. Dudley left school as soon as he turned 16. Dwayne is in his third year of university. Dudley spent his leisure time 'chillin' with friends; Dwayne raised money for charity, and worked a part-time job. Dudley, 27, has no idea what he wants to be when he grows up, Dwayne, a Business major, intends to start his own business. Dudley speaks with the voice of one who feels beaten down and has stopped trying to make sense of his situation. Dwayne is forceful, articulate and lives on the basis that nothing or no-one will take his dignity: traits that Black males are warned will get them in trouble with 'the system', as they are so easily interpreted as aggressiveness, arrogance and disrespect. Dudley rolls his fist as he expresses contempt for the police: Dwayne quotes Bob Marley's song about running away so one can live to fight another day. For Dwayne, his will not be a physical fight.

Notwithstanding their night and day existence, Dudley and Dwayne share one painful aspect of their lives: they say they are stopped and questioned, repeatedly, by police. The experience has left Dudley barely willing to talk and even when he does he recounts only two incidents on tape. He captures the others as "lots of things" and only when the tape is off do these 'things/incidents' come stumbling out. The number of incidents is not astronomical, but his frustration and anger grows with every one. Dwayne's incidents take place as he drives his sporty, 'souped-up' car. He can well afford it, since he bought his first car at 18 from his own summer and part-time money. Most of Dudley's encounters take place as he walks around his inner city neighbourhood. Since he has no steady job, one assumes he can't afford a car. He rides a bicycle.

If Dwayne believed that being a smart, educated, intelligent and non-threatening in dress, former cadet would spare him from police treatment consistent with the definition of racial profiling, he's now facing another reality. In these kinds of interviews where individuals seem particular profiling-prone, one tries to allow for those legitimate times when police opinion of whether an individual ran a red light differs from that individual. This notwithstanding, Dwayne is clearly not experiencing life as a normal 21-year-old university student. His trials with police began when he was 15.

"One night [while I was in cadets] I was walking home through the ravine behind where I live after dropping a cadet off and a group of police pulled me over. They flashlight me and asked 'What are you doing out this time of night'. I said, 'I'm just walking home'. The story ended with me on the grass and my Mon had to come and take me out of the police hands. They said they were holding me because there were people in the area breaking in. At this point I was able to prove to them that I was an A student. In my bag was my army cadet uniform. They didn't believe me till my Mom walked out.

"But the real extent of the problem started when I started driving. It started off as a joke, kind of, in my head. But I'd get pulled over [so often] I'd have to start showing documents. It got serious when they couldn't find anything so they'd start making up things. They have given me multiple tickets but I can tell you right now, I have never been charged with a speeding ticket. They sometimes give me ticket for tint...but I make sure that when I go to court I have my documents that show that my tint regulation, my muffler regulation [are in order], so these charges never stick.

"As an 18-year-old things got to a different level, because Traffic Court is just a financial issue. Now it's legal matters that are threatening against me. I graduated from high school, 80%, working part-time as a manager [in a fast food restaurant], still in army cadets and in the hands of the police...[My part-time job did not allow me to grow my hair. But now I began to grow my hair]...That's when the targeting got to a different level. I always kept my hair neatly braided. They might see a little bit of jewellery...that's when it started to get serious and I got the deep searches. They'd pull me over...most of the time they tell me it's 'routine check'. That's the term they use."

His thoughtful observations shed light on why among African Canadians, especially youth, one finds both Dudleys and Dwaynes living within the shadows of the same inner city high-rise buildings.

"[Some people will successfully navigate the system]. Another individual can go through the system and become lost. I can tell you stories of hundreds of literally hundreds of people who are lost in the system: geniuses who could sit right next to me in my senior economics class and could excel in it. But they have been lost in the system since the late 90s when they were my age. The system has allowed them to have hate against white people...against any people, so they turn against their own friends. They're like, 'Who gives a F... anyway, whether I'm [law abiding] or not they're going to hold me anyway.

"Peter Tosh talks about the same thing as slavery with a smile. Brothers are expected to live under the system and even if you try to break out, you're going to be held down unless you adopt it as norm...Some people might play it off better, but why should I have to play it out? Why should I have to cut my hair just to be accepted by the system? I'm a born Canadian. I'm a taxpayer. I'm a university student..."

He talks about friends who are ending up with criminal records "for nothing".

"They become outcasts to the system. Three or four years down the road they get caught up in all these things, [following] one little problem. They see a white guy on the road and they might say, listen, this guy is going to grow up and do the same thing to me and because of that they have that mind and thought process in their head that listen, this guy could be my enemy one day. This is what gets created out of that environment.

Dwayne says he's not charged every time he's stopped, although he does seem to spend large amounts of time between school and work fighting various charges. Although almost all charges against Dwayne have been dropped, he carries the papers and court transcripts around with him, in case he's stopped again.

"Some of them treat me with respect when they see my intelligence...Some of them run away after [they see my documents]. Some of them do apologize when they see that I have a different thought process...Some of them just let it go and say 'Have a nice day, sir'. ...The Brother that doesn't understand the system though, who's been pushed away from it, what is he left with? Ignorance. Some people may get to the point where they strike the police officers after they give them a 'one-two' grab. Now he's got them on something." Immediately Dudley comes to mind.

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

For Dudley and Dwayne, moving forward comes with challenge, albeit a different type of challenge for each. Noel, a 23-year-old university student and born-again Christian knows exactly how Dwayne and Dudley feel. He grew up in 'the projects' and, religious conversion notwithstanding, still experiences random police questioning. The feeling of being targeted as a Black man irks Noel and he vows to help African Canadian youth in his neighbourhood to develop a strong sense of self. For Noel, Solomon's wisdom in the Bible is his weapon for responding to police—offer a 'soft answer' when accosted, use the system later to deal with profiling.

CHAPTER 6

SOLUTIONS

Interviewees invariably offered ideas on how to address racial profiling.

Hire More African Canadian Police Officers

"There are African Canadian youth who want to become cops. I have been to groups where African Canadian kids are saying I want to become a cop. I want to become a soldier. I want to do something with my life. I have one friend [who has several family members in the police force]. But because of the experience he had with the police, he no longer has that mentality...He's straight today...he's not in the right state of mind that he was in. He's messed up now.

"We need more African Canadian cops in African Canadian communities. They should not see this as racism. How would they like it if we put two African Canadian cops in a white community, rolling in a car, giving white kids bad looks. They wouldn't like it. "

(Anthony 18)

"I don't want to be racist or anything but African Canadian cops understand where we are coming from."

(Banks, 15)

Whereas few argued with the benefits of having a healthy representation of African Canadian police officers, some interviewees issued a caveat: the mere presence of a black face will not, per se, smooth away the animosity and open doors of communication between police services and the African Canadian communities. Interviewees felt that police services first need to understand and acknowledge the experiences African Canadians are having with the police, period. In so doing they will grasp why people may not open up even to officers of their own race to the extent that is assumed. Secondly, viewing officers first as officers and then as Black officers allows police services to equip African Canadian officers at a professional level to do their jobs at a community level.

Equipping officers includes training them to come to terms with their own ambivalence—even racism sometimes—towards the African Canadian community. (We say this with a straight face. We interviewed at least one African Canadian youth who complained that an African Canadian officer called him a 'nigger'.

It also means providing them with the same training and professional support that would normally be considered a requirement for dealing with any group of people. Being Black may open doors, but it is not a tool for doing the job.

Finally, hiring Blacks on the assumption that they will work magic White officers can't, is a two-edged sword. First of all, African Canadian officers do not want to feel that they are perpetually on the 'ethnic beat', unless they have been specifically assigned to those duties. Some ambitious ethnic officers are wary of the ethnic beat, however. They see it as a dead-end street, not because it is inferior, but because like any other organization, police services have their own cultural values regarding potential leaders. According to some African Canadian officers in police services, leadership selection tends to favour areas such as Homicide, Emergency Task Force, Hold-ups and Sexual Assault, that are visible, high profile and which offer opportunities to shine in the eyes of the police brass and of the public.

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

Some African Canadians also question the notion of expecting one person to -- clean up as it were -- the mess made by 1,000 people. We witnessed one example at a conference at which organizations shared best practices of programs geared to youth at risk and, in some cases, African Canadian youth at risk. One program, run by an African Canadian police officer, was an excellent example of the kind of initiative that is often recommended as a way of keeping youth engaged and learning, instead of 'liming'/'chillin'/'hanging'.

The program was actually created for the benefit of the officer's division, but its success led to requests from a neighbouring division to bring the program there as well. The officer described his first visit to schools in the second division. In one school, a program coordinator asked him to come in plain clothes. He declined and went to the school in uniform. As expected, youth began to walk away the moment they saw him. The officer realized that at this rate he would not get registrants for the program, so he said he called out to them, "Hey, do you play basketball?" It was only then that he caught the students' attention and they gradually began to approach him.

Listening to this presentation produced two conflicting emotions: satisfaction that a successful program is giving youth a chance to escape the streets and curiosity as to (a) why the officer felt he needed to wear his uniform almost as a form of protection and (b) why youth recoiled from the uniform. One assumes that somewhere in the past the youth had negative experiences with the police (or had heard stories of others who did). They clearly did not see the police as their friends and their thinking was, move away from him as far and as fast as you can, regardless of whether he is Black.

Create Positive Outlets for Youth

One Toronto community with a palpable resentment towards police behaviour also has no recreational centre within easy reach of the hundreds of mainly African Canadian low income families that make its cluster of high rise buildings their home. The result: repeated ticketing by security for 'loitering' in front of their building, with accompanying altercations that in many cases result in police being called. African Canadian parents who live in the area said in a focus group that targeting in apartment complexes is a bigger problem than just policing. They feel that as society supports policing, it also has a responsibility to provide outlets to youth in these densely populated areas. Meaningful activity reduces congregating outside of buildings and hence the need to have police hold innocent youth under surveillance.

Without some form of community-based recreational and/or life skills program, the youth say they have little option but stand out in front and on the compound of their apartment building, continuing the vicious cycle of ticketing, harassment and police involvement.

Coby, 18, describes it this way:

"We have nothing to do. We have to be locked up in our house like birds. Just birds. You can't go outside, security guards chase us and shine their high-beam lights on us."

Members of the focus group acknowledge that police organizations are not responsible for building community centres. They feel, however, that they have a stake in the communities they serve and should use their influence to help bring such proactive measures into being. Not only would such an effort net them positive community response, it would

reduce the unnecessary harassment and criminalization of African Canadian low-income youth for doing exactly what young people all over like to do—stand around and chat or play.

Help Police Bring Law-Breakers to Justice

“I think that as community members banding together you shouldn’t fear anyone.” (Daisy, early to mid-40s.)

“We need to have more interaction between police and the community. Also if something is going wrong, we must not act as if we are condoning certain things and we just come out and try to defend certain things. We must show that we are fair. Sometimes, for example if there is a shooting—black on black crime—we must not act as if it’s OK for this person to shoot that person but it is not OK for that person (police) to shoot that person. We have to stand up against every kind of criminal activity, doesn’t matter who it happens to. It’s a life.

“Once there was a shooting. (Several prominent African Canadian community advocates) were there (after). They saw the gun salute going on. And they didn’t stop it. They knew that these people are not supposed to carry guns. If they are going to talk about shooting among Black people...they should stand out and show that this is not acceptable and not condone it.”

(Retired Black police officer)

Don’t Criminalize Entire Communities

One controversial area among interviewees was whether particular communities merit more intense policing because of criminal elements present. One high-ranking African Canadian interviewee pointed that some urban communities do have features that make them more attractive to criminal elements. This does not mean, however, he said, that the community is ‘bad’. The interviews almost always revealed another side to these ‘bad’ communities: a sense of pride and ownership by local residents. Interviews at local community centres show that it’s clear that community members often don’t see their community the way the police or society at large may see it.

The media is seen as a critical part of this blanket definition of certain communities.

“African Canadian youth need to realize that the media is a construction. What we are living is our reality, not the media reality. We need to be able to recognize the good in the police as well because I’m sure if anything happens they’re first person they are going to call to come help. African Canadians need to defend themselves but not be ignorant...know their rights.”

(Sylvia, 18)

“I was walking home with my friends...two White guys. The police passed us with the White guys and went to my other friends walking ahead of us. (Steve) “Because they saw us as a bunch of Black guys they came to us and said we look suspicious. But why if there is one Black guy with White guys they won’t check him out? They were just 2-3 meters in front of them but the police came over to us and were like “Where are you guys coming from? Give us your names, whatever, whatever...went into our pockets to try and see what we have...”

(Jacob)

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

"A White teacher once told me, that the way she looks at it and the way the cops see it is like, when they see a bunch of White kids they call them a club. But when they see a bunch of Black kids they call them a gang."

(Anthony, 18)

Recognize African Canadian Youth Potential

Anthony, 18 talks a lot about African Canadian youth being responsible for the choices they make to behave in ways that justify negative stereotypes. He also speaks about African Canadian youth needing to pull themselves up by the bootstraps or if necessary with the help of community organizations. Did he always think and speak this way?

"These thoughts were always there deep inside of me because I was always a good person. Before I got arrested I was always in church, I loved my parents and my grandma. At first it was like Mother and So. Then it was Cadet/Drill Sergeant. Teacher/Student. After I got arrested it changed everything. I used to run the streets, chill with gang members, get involved in shootouts, get in deep trouble. I've gotten in trouble, you know. I've been places. When I look back at that today, all I can do is pass the message on. I graduated from that stage. Now my Mom and I are more like friends."

Know that Some of Us Are Wealthy

"This is 2003. You have young businessmen with dreads and some of the richest people in the world are African Canadian. Society really needs to look at itself and say we (African Canadians) are evolving as people. Hairstyles change. People get piercings. Young people are driving big cars.. and there is a lot more young money, even compared to 10 years ago." He adds that as a culture African Canadians have a penchant for nice cars, regardless of the lack in other areas of their lives. In the Caribbean for instance, people sometimes have the latest models even before they reach North America.

"The statistics that they (police) are going by have changed. But they have not changed. And so they are insulting a lot of the general public.

"This shouldn't even have to be said because what we do with our money has nothing to do with the law. As long as it's going towards something that is legal I don't feel the need to explain to a person why I chose to buy a \$50,000 car over a house. Deal with the real issues at hand where you have killers and pedophiles on the streets. Pulling me over because I look like I may have stolen the vehicle is just wasting our time."

(Paul, 22, driver of a late model BMW)

Eliminate Negative Stereotyping

"There are a lot of good police officers. But the few bad ones make it look back for the rest. It's the same thing with the small percentage of black people (who commit crimes). In everything there is a percentage of good and bad."

(African Canadian police officer)

Paul believes that this message needs to be part of police training. He would love the chance to participate in a police training course.

"I'd like to say, here I am. I'm a tax-paying young urban African Canadian male and you don't have to think that I stole the vehicle. People steal, not African Canadian or White. People kill. People steal. So you should not racially profile. You need to profile everybody then." Paul adds: "I think the screening [process] for police needs to be looked at. I think they really need to check people's psyche to see how people think. There are a lot of people that think very twisted. They think the way they were raised and a lot of people were raised to believe a certain way when that's not the way it is any more.

"I heard that police are told to go with their gut instincts. But if you have a racist cop and he goes with his gut instincts every time...then we are going to have a lit [fewer] urban African Canadian youth. Because he's going to figure that everyone of those people have a gun...It's very sad to think that the very people that are supposed to be saving you are the very people you're afraid of."

(Paul, 22)

"Police need to think before they act...to not judge the book for its cover but by their actions as well. If a person is just walking down the street not doing anything antagonizing them is not the right way."

(Sylvia, 18)

"I don't think we should get rid of the way we dress. That's us. I have a cousin who dresses with his pants below but he's not a bad person."

(Banks, 15)

"I think the police need to stop and just think...When you scoop up the youth of today what's going to be the growth of tomorrow?"

(Anthony, 18)

From the perspective of interviewees, lasting solutions must take into account the following factors as they apply to police and community. People say they do not want to be in the same place 25 years from now. They want to see:

- 1) Understanding of police work and fewer of limitations on public access to some aspects of that work
- 2) Fertile ground on both sides in which recommendations can thrive
- 3) Rejection of 'divide and conquer' strategies and promotion of the will to face truth, deal with tough issues and be transparent in the search of solutions
- 4) Built-in opportunity for dialogue and continuous exploration of each other's thinking and perspective
- 5) 'Safe spaces' (literally and figuratively) away from limelight and media, where police and community can continue dialogue when they hit rough patches
- 6) Willingness to check egos, power plays and political posturing at the door in the interest of working together to ensure safe communities and protected rights
- 7) A process for educating and enlightening the African Canadian populace about police work and its place in society, as well as about African Canadian's right to freedom from targeting, stereotyping and racially biased policing
- 8) Enlightened police services that are willing to examine both their systems (ways of doing things) and individuals within the system in order to eradicate any existing profiling
- 9) Willingness on the part of police services to explore policing techniques that will aid them in doing their jobs without randomly targeting African Canadian males
- 10) Willingness on the part of police services to re-orient policing in light of the current landscape in which they operate, particularly relating to African Canadian youth. The majority of these youth are just that: young people

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

who like others are growing up in a world their parents could scarcely imagine when they were their age. Police officers, like teachers and similar professionals, are being required to serve as part social workers, part community development officers and part communications experts. They are even finding on their plates responsibilities that previously belonged to parents.

"Police officers came to my school, one African Canadian one white.... "For me I thought it was very good, it gave ...us as minorities a different perspective on the police and on what they are about....We need to be open to what they have to say. They can bring us together but we have to be willing to hear what they are saying and accept and compromise...they change and we change."

(Sylvia, 18)

Anthony, as does Dwayne, believes that empty schools should be used on week-ends to educate youth about the police.

"You change their thoughts on cops. Ninety-five percent of the Black kids out there think negative about cops, because of what they see...(or) because of what they have done to them. And not just Black kids, because there's white kids that have these things happen to them. When I got arrested I got kicked out of school. I was in a support program. There were cops that constantly came and tried to change our thoughts on how we saw them...make us realize that what we think they are about they are not about."

(Anthony, 18)

Improve Police Interpersonal Training

More emphasis, some interviewees say, needs to be laid on the value of interpersonal skills—how to deal with people. Interviewees say the payoff could come in greater cooperation by African Canadians who would feel more respected by law enforcement officers. Other interviewees suggest that police 'intuition' needs to be trained so they can distinguish between criminal and racial profiling, especially officers who come from communities with few African Canadians. Poor interpersonal and intuitive skills training makes it easier to fall back on negative stereotypes when situations are tense or uncertain.

Interact and Communicate

Few interviewees doubted the value of police-community initiatives such as Toronto Police Service's T.R.O.O.P program, which report good success in making connections and opening the doors of communication between youth participants and the police. T.R.O.O.P sends at risk youth on Outward Bound-type wilderness outings with police volunteers. Over the course of a week-end as police and youth together navigate treacherous rapids or watch out for bears, barriers melt and humanity replaces the badge. Such programs should be continued and expanded, with one caveat: they are not vaccines that guarantee long periods of goodwill. The benefits need to be invested back into continued opportunities for dialogue when the participants return.

"These programs are extremely useful because (officers) get to understand that the braids, the wave caps and all that are just things that we wear. They are not really our character. The more we get to chill with them the more they get to know about us. This makes them better as police officers, they don't just stop anybody, no matter how they look. We may dress like some of the kids who do really bad things but you can't base your search on that. When they come and play basketball with us, that helps them.

(Rudy, 18)

"A good police officer will take time to know his people. He stops and talks to people and so on. When you become friendly with the people in the area they tend to come out and tell you little things that are happening. But if you just drive by with your windows up and not talk to anybody, people don't know you and they are afraid to come out and talk to you.

"It has to be consistent. Let's say on the first approach (people) won't even answer you. But when you see her again if you say hi, she will know that you said hi yesterday. So they ignore you and curse you and so on, but the next day you go back and you say 'Hi Buddy' and so on. You learn that his name is John, so the next day you pull up and you say 'Hi John, how're you doing'. Once the guy knows that you know his name, he's going to talk to you.

"You have to be seen to be genuine. But supposed you are the same person who was a badass over there, and you come into the neighbourhood saying 'Hey Buddy', people figure you want to get something from them; you want to cut their backside.

(Retired African Canadian police officer)

"Unless the cops and the youth decide to communicate putting white cops in African Canadian neighbourhoods or communities will not work. In order for that to work there needs to be a lot of strong communication. If there is no respect and communication you're not going to find peace and love... We need to work on change. But the cops need to work on change too. If I am a cop and I go to arrest a bad guy, if I don't [communicate with] him obviously he's going to try to get away and I'm going to have to do something to him. If I have good communication I'm not going to have to rough him up or bang him up. I'll put the handcuff on him and put him in the car peacefully...A good cop I would go up to you and say, hey man, look you did the crime. I'm here to arrest you, let's just leave it at that. Don't behave bad, don't try to get away. I'm cool with that. I'll put you in the car peacefully."

(Anthony, 18)

But in the interviews we see another side to the notion of interacting that can impede progress in building bridges with the community.

"When the cops come around people just disperse. They don't want to be around them. (Even) when they are walking away the cops are like 'Hey, where' you going? What do you have?...Why're you so anxious to leave?' They repeat the questions over and over so you just memorize them and answer them (even before they ask). When you answer them like that, they get even more suspicious. Or they're like 'Did I ask you, Smartass? You want me to smack you right now? They try to threaten you and they think that's going to work. They threaten to take you into the station. I have friends who say when they get there they put the phone book on their chest and hit them, so they have no marks. Its either that or they wear their gloves. Don't you notice how most of them wear gloves?"

IN THEIR OWN VOICES \

"We're not their friends. They have their authority to do what they have to do. They're not there to make friends on the street or talk to young kids asking them for information. If they need to know something about a crime, that's different. They need to talk to people. If people want to cooperate they cooperate. Unless it's that, I don't think they should be harassing Black people in general."

(Jacob)

Recognize Your Own Vulnerabilities

"The cops know (the potential for good in African Canadian youth). To tell you the truth, they know. But the lifestyle that they themselves are caught up in...it's going to be difficult for them to break out. For example, if you go downtown, the cops might be more pressing because of the community. They might be more hardcore. They might be harder people than in Scarborough because Scarborough might be a softer community with less crime than downtown Toronto."

(Anthony, 18)

Keep Youth Behaviour in Perspective

"If an African Canadian person does something it gets blown out of proportion".

"One reason African Canadian youth don't come out to community forums is that they feel that the system has failed them."

(Suzy, mid 30s)

"Kids are not going to the anti-police or anti government rallies because they don't fit within their lifestyle. Something else is perpetuating these behaviours and we are not targeting it. Something else is affecting the way some youth see the cops. How come Black university students are protesting about the loss of a course program, but they are not speaking out about the steady diet of lyrics that [glorify when] a person kills someone else because they scuff their shoes without apologizing?"

(Mildred, 19)

EPILOGUE

We give the final word to the voices of African Canadian police officers, who urge African Canadians to “use the system” and “know the law”.

“Do not shrink from using the system on the assumption that it is biased...When stopped by the police and they ask you for i.d. without cause, give them the i.d., then take their badge number and go complain to their supervisor...”

“Pick up a copy of the Criminal Code. Know your rights. [Blacks have been in this country a long time.] Don’t let some 21 or 22 year-old with a gun on his hip...tell you what the law is, you should be telling him what the law is...Every home has a Bible: every home should have a Criminal Code. It’s up to us to know the basics so people can’t take advantage of us...Ignorance of the law is no excuse not to obey the law...We are not back home anymore. This is not your home, this is your children’s home. The system will mess with you only if you are ignorant...Other communities are doing this, you can’t fool them. Don’t tell me about having to work two jobs, people from other communities work in a corner store 24 hours a day and they still find time to understand the system, and many of them don’t even speak English. You can’t fool them.”

(African Canadian police officer.)

“Sometimes when their time is (running out) and officers...want to have their workload...they’re looking for people with a bad attitude. If you give them a bad attitude, you’re going to get a ticket. When people don’t know the law people tell them not to give the police their drivers license because they are going to give them a ticket. So when the (police) stop them they refuse to give them their licence. It’s an arrestable offence to refuse to show an officer your license.

“So then you move from an ordinary traffic violation to a criminal offence. The officer says, ‘I’m going to arrest you’. The moment the police touch them they may hit the police (to brush them off). Now it goes into assault.”

(Retired African Canadian police officer)

In Their Own Voices has provided opportunity for African Canadians to tell their own stories and experiences of racial profiling by police officers. African Canadians have given their prerequisites for successfully addressing the problem. And they have provided, through their own experiences and in their own voices, a profile of profiling.

THE END