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Re: TFVAW/LAC/GUY/RT&HSH/04

FINAL REPORT TO UN VAW TRUST FUND ON JOINT PROJECT IN SUPPORT OF ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

.
From: **RED THREAD** and **HELP & SHELTER**
To: UNIFEM (Barbados)

PART ONE

I. INTRODUCTION

What we have accomplished via this project is the conduct, in a racially divided country, of the first interviews across race with women and men who were victims of and witnesses to a seminal period of race violence in Guyana, and the first attempt to raise and deal with sexual abuse and violence against women in that conflict in a way that avoids both narrow partisanship and any attempt to create false equivalents.

The context for the project is the history of race conflict on the Guyanese coast where over 90% of the population of just three-quarter million resides,[i] and which primarily involves the two largest groups, Guyanese of African and Indian descent,[ii] with the two main periods in Guyana's modern political history when tensions between African and Indian Guyanese led to racial violence being 1961-1964 and the period after 2001/2002. Especially in 1961-1964 but also in later years, for example, in 1997, the violence included sexual abuse and violence against girls and women that was under-reported and where reported, usually treated as an assault against a whole race and not also as an assault against women of the particular group. The project as originally designed was intended as a step towards filling those silences.

The original timeline for the project was April 2005 (when funds were received) to April 2006, and the investigation was to centre around the violence of 2001-2004, the epicentre for which was the East Coast of Demerara (see map). It proved impossible to adhere to this deadline or the new deadlines proposed in our August 31, 2006 report or October 16, 2007 update, at each stage because of the effects of the growing violence and of its growing complexity. In retrospect, the violence that began in and has continued since 2001/2002 was not "only" the politically inspired race violence that the country had experienced in the past, but signalled an explosion in the causes, directors, perpetrators and levels of brutality in the country. Over the period, in the context of an increasingly criminalized economy based mainly in trafficking in illegal drugs and in people, myriad squads of gunmen with apparently overlapping personnel were created, allegedly involved not only in direct criminal enterprises but in militarized political organizing and extrajudicial killings. Early in 2008, there were massacres involving 23 children, women, and men in two communities, including one in the region where the project was located.

The August 31, 2006 report and October 16, 2007 update outlined the changes in the environment and how they influenced and/or made necessary changes in the period of violence the project would target; its objectives (though not its underlying aim); and the timeline for completion. The main points of these reports are summarized below.

II. SUMMARY OF ALL THE WORK DONE

The following tables were both taken from the October 31, 2006 report; the second has been updated.

Table 1: Activities as originally planned and implemented

Activities and objectives as outlined in application	**Implementation**
Activity: Meetings of Red Thread and Help and Shelter. Objective: To iron out arrangements for Help and Shelter's administration of the funds and the requirements for the narrative reports and accounts	Done; no problems
Activity: Assembly of project teams. Objective: To organize separate teams for the collection of primary and secondary data	Two teams were assembled: one for the collection of secondary data comprising 4 women, 2 with previous experience and 2 trained for the project; and one for the collection of primary data comprised of 5 women, all with previous experience. For both teams, the mix in terms of skills, experience, race/ethnicity and age was good.
Activity: Internal workshops. Objectives: To discuss with participants the issues underlying race/ethnic violence against girls and women in Guyana To provide practical training in interviewing victims of violence for those with less experience	3 workshops and 4 practical training sessions (for a total of 20 days) were successfully held. The internal workshops on the history of race/ethnic violence against girls/women in Guyana fuelled passion about pursuing the project.
Activity: Meetings with contact individuals and groups in the communities at the heart of the violence and with individuals and groups that work in or with those communities.* Objective: To inform them of the project and request their identification of victims, witnesses and other key informants and facilitation of interviews	(a) We identified contact individuals and groups for the more recent period of violence beginning in 2001, and these contacts agreed to facilitate introductions to victims, witnesses and other key informants. (b) From contacts in the community described as the epicentre of the recent violence, we received credible reports of sexual violence against Afro-Guyanese women by an Afro-Guyanese criminal/military/political group; our contacts said they knew victims and we could get testimonies either from

Activities and objectives as outlined in application	Implementation
	them directly or from people close to them. (c) Contacts in 3 Indo-Guyanese communities attempted to put us in touch with women and girls said to be victims and witnesses.
Activity: Purchasing equipment and materials. Objective: To ensure that we have available the equipment and materials needed for smooth running of the project	Purchases of equipment and materials needed to be made.
Activity: Compilation of incidents of sexual abuse and violence recorded. Objective: To bring together all recorded incidents from all sources since approximately May 2001	(a) By December 2005 each issue of the 3 daily newspapers from February 2002 to December 2003 had been reviewed and information compiled. However, the newspapers often did not state the racial origins of victims and perpetrators, although these could be guessed from the names of persons and locations. In addition, reports were not presented clearly enough to tell when there was sexual violence. (b) The Police were approached for their reports for the period February 2002-December 2003. Unfortunately since their records are not computerized only totals are available and we still do not have the promised break down of figures. (c) Reports of ethnic organizations were sought; only 2 had been compiled, both by Indo-Guyanese organizations and one was for 1998; the relevant report was reviewed and information compiled. A small booklet by an Afro-Guyanese male elder who was a former leader of an Afro-Guyanese organization was reviewed and information extracted.
-Verification of authenticity of victims, witnesses, other key informants identified by the contacts by brief interviews of 1-3 others in relation to each name provided. -To ensure, as far as humanly possible, that all incidents recorded in the final document are authentic.	It was at this stage that obstacles mounted: (a) First, we lost our most reliable contact with victims of the rapes in the community described above as the epicentre of the violence (he was a taxi driver and village activist who was killed in an accident). Although by then we had developed other contacts (all women), after a high government official said that he knew of the rapes, they vehemently denied that there had been any rapes in the community. Reasons were fear of reprisal and a strong need to defend their community which was being collectively criticized and ostracized. In 2 cases the contacts grudgingly admitted that

Activities and objectives as outlined in application	Implementation
	they knew of the rapes but placed the blame on the victims themselves and again refused to put us in touch with any. Repeated discussions were held in an attempt to persuade them to change their position but these proved ineffective. (b) Repeated efforts to interview Indo-Guyanese women victims were unsuccessful, with even the women who agreed to talk to us in the end proving evasive because they were afraid.

Table 2: Activities as amended at August 2006 and as finally implemented

Objectives as amended where necessary at August 2006	Activities as planned August 2006	Activities as implemented
a. To compile a document on sexual abuse and violence against girls and women in periods of heightened race conflict in Guyana which: i. Provides testimonies of victims and witnesses of this violence; ii. Explores and assesses the existence of opposing accounts, both written and oral, of this violence; iii. Considers the impact of the violence and the existence of different, frequently opposed ways of telling that history on relations between Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese and in particular, between Indo-	Interviews: begin with a small purposive and exploratory sample of 16 women, 8 each from Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese coastal communities. Use snowball techniques to identify women. Conduct interviews with women who were at least teenagers (13-14) in 1961 focusing on: women's experience of race growing up, paying close attention to the families and communities they were a part of; on their memories, experiences and what they were told about the 1964 riots; on sexual violence against women and girls and any other reported incidents of sexual violence; on how this affected them; on their sense of why it is so difficult to talk about these issues	**PRIMARY DATA** (1) A number of meetings were held prior to the start of fieldwork, to discuss the project, set up contact lists and work schedules, and decide on the logistics of the interview process and the order of community visits (the latter proved very difficult to organize in any systematic manner, as we were dependent on respondents' schedules. In some cases like Better Hope, we were able to visit everyone over three days. In a community like Sand Reef, Annandale, we ended up visiting on several occasions). We also conducted and transcribed approximately seven pilot interviews (later we revisited some of these respondents to seek further clarification, and these interviews were included in the study). Preliminary analysis was done to see what was missing (one of the things we did

Objectives as amended where necessary at August 2006	Activities as planned August 2006	Activities as implemented
Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese women; iv. Offers some preliminary suggestions on ways in which we might work to address both the violence and the divisions among women from different racio-ethnic backgrounds that it helps to produce.		not emphasize enough initially was a sense of what life was like prior to the disturbances, and some early family history was also absent), and we met once again to refine the final interview instrument before heading into the field. (2) Interviews were conducted with a much larger sample (44 instead of 16) and with both women (27) and men (17). Interviewees were as planned both Indo-Guyanese (19) and Afro-Guyanese or Mixed (25) and the great majority were either 61-70 years old (16) or 71 and over (22). The larger number of respondents enabled us to reach far more communities on the East Coast of Demerara, as well as to talk with respondents from Wismar/Mackenzie[iii], areas key to the disturbances of 1964. Interviews paid close attention to the issues outlined as we looked at the various narratives of the early 1960s that circulate; whether the popular memories of the two race groups are as different from each other as written accounts; whether there are other memories that contradict these written versions; whether respondents believe that a public discussion of the period would be relevant and useful today; and whether there are differences in how women and men experienced and remember the violence. **SECONDARY DATA** (3) (a) Reports and information on racial

Objectives as amended where necessary at August 2006	Activities as planned August 2006	Activities as implemented
		violence post the 1997 and 2001 elections; (b) literature survey; (c) newspapers for 1963-64 collected and analyzed; (4) Filming of ceremony commemorating a key 1964 bombing in Hurudaia, on the Demerara River, that claimed the lives of over 40 women, men and children
b. To bring the violence and the polarisingly different accounts of the violence up from underground and force them onto the national agenda.	Public campaign using advocacy team	AT THIS STAGE, a public campaign has been decided against for the reasons outlined in the October 16 update: feelings about race are so raw that we have a responsibility to look for the most useful and effective way and time of bringing our findings to the national agenda; the task cannot be tied to a funded project. Repeatedly the women and men we interviewed believed a national discussion on race was necessary, and cautioned strongly against rushing into something that could inflame old wounds and be used as an instrument of division. To indicate how seriously we take this, we are in the process of thinking about various strategies for bringing the findings forward for a discussion, such as a children's book, or a documentary that could be used in a public education campaign.
c. To empower the girls and women who have been victims to see themselves without shame and to find their own ways to demand justice.	To be addressed via the campaign referred to above.	Although women did talk about sexual violence, and in one case a woman had witnessed such violence, none of the interviewees, according to our transcripts, was a victim of such violence. Shame is a very big issue here, and also the

Objectives as amended where necessary at August 2006	Activities as planned August 2006	Activities as implemented
		primacy of race violence in people's narratives likely overshadows other kinds of victimization that occurred. It is clear that women experienced the 1964 violence in some specific ways; what is not so clear is how much their responses to us on the question of sexual violence was conditioned by silence and a discomfort in addressing this. This suggests that there is critical work to be done on how women get specifically targeted in ways that cross race divides; it is something to be addressed in our campaigns and future work, and not an issue we could necessarily get at so easily in the course of one interview on a very sensitive topic.
d. To begin to change attitudes in the country so that the girls and women are seen as victims and not as having brought shame on their families.	To be addressed via the campaign. In addition, the completed document will be delivered to key institutions.	For the reasons stated above, we decided to begin this process very carefully at the level of Red Thread and a course of weekly discussions inside Red Thread was conducted over 4 months. Two major meetings of the network (see (f) below re network) were also organized and discussions held on violence against women in race conflict. The first meeting, held in June 2007, included 24 women from 8 communities and the second, held in November 2007, included 36 women from 8 communities. These will be continued beyond the life of the project.
e. To challenge and begin to change the attitudes of women	To be addressed within and through the network described at (f) below .	This formed part of the discussions referred to above.

Objectives as amended where necessary at August 2006	Activities as planned August 2006	Activities as implemented
who accept and even encourage sexual abuse and violence against girls and women of the other race		
f. To lay the groundwork for building a network of women from all ethnic communities, supported by men, who will consistently organize in defence of girls and women who are victims of sexual abuse and violence – at home/in the family, from strangers, or in race/ethnic conflict.	Building of network of women across race/ discussions on sexual abuse and violence against women and girls, – at home/in the family, from strangers, and in race/ethnic conflict.	This network has been built (and continues to be built) not only through the work of this project but all Red Thread's work, especially our anti-racism and anti-violence work. It includes 31 committed women from the communities relevant to this project (ECD and Linden).
	Monitoring and evaluation	3 meetings of the research teams were held to debrief, evaluate work for period A final evaluation meeting was held with the research team, other Red Thread and network women

The original project document also had another objective which was somewhat delinked from the overall aim of the project - to take steps towards achieving improved implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) as it stands while reviewing its adequacy and campaigning for changes if necessary. In relation to this objective the planned activities were: (1) to campaign for changes in the rape laws; (2) to train small units of community-based grassroots women trained in provisions of the DVA and support for their work; and (3) to lobby Parliament and other organizations to take steps to address problems of DVA implementation in interior (mainly Indigenous) communities. The following actions were taken: (1) at the request of the relevant Ministry of Government we reviewed the proposals in the consultation paper on changes in the rape laws prior to the consultations; (2) we conducted 10 workshops in five communities, including Linden and the East Coast Demerara, to train small units of women and the wider community of women about domestic violence and the use of the DVA; and (3) we continued membership of the National Committee against Violence against Women where in collaboration with Help and Shelter, Red Thread produced a draft domestic violence policy which is allowed for under the Domestic Violence Act.

III. HOW THE PROJECT EVOLVED: SUMMARY OF THE AUGUST 31, 2006 REPORT AND OCTOBER 16, 2007 UPDATE

A. Main points of the August 31, 2006 report

In outlining the increasing complexity of the conditions of violence in the country, the August 31, 2006 report mentioned two main impediments to the investigation as we began it:

- Most of the violence in and after 2002 was centred in the East Coast of Demerara, where many of our contacts and the women we had originally hoped to interview resided. The key community in the project was Buxton, a village with a long and proud historical tradition of resistance to injustice since its post-Emancipation establishment, but which has changed fundamentally in the six years since escapees from a February 2002 jailbreak set up a base in its backlands. As Buxton became increasingly identified by many Guyanese as a staging post for violent crime and there were numerous violent encounters with the police and army, which eventually set up camp in the community, the mood and reality in the village became one of siege. In this environment, we found that both our contacts and the women we approached for interviews were silent (silenced), and/or that 'race loyalty' had led to a hardening of racial positions among them. We also lost a number of contacts following the tragic death of a key informant in a motor vehicle accident.
- Since the gunmen operating in the various squads were (and are) generally from one race/ethnic group even when their employers are of different race/ethnic groups, it was increasingly difficult to identify with any degree of certainty the motives for any act of violence, including the violence relevant to the project.

These complications had profound implications for our project as originally conceived. The secondary research for the project as initially planned had been completed by the end of December 2005 (see Table 1 above). However, with national elections (always a period of heightened tension between the groups) scheduled for August 2006, the situation became much more volatile and tense. Beginning in January, there were a number of high profile assassinations which exacerbated the climate of anxiety, uncertainty and fear. The

immediate run up to the elections created a still more uncertain political climate and the context was one not only of violence but of increasingly partisan discussion of who was responsible for it.

Consequently, Red Thread kept postponing the start dates for the interviews, looking for a period in which the race/ethnic tension was easier. Finally, around July 2006, we recognized that it was impossible to begin fieldwork until after the elections had concluded. We also came to the realization that, given the tense situation in the country and in particular on the East Coast, Demerara, and given the explosive nature of conversations on current race relations between the two major groups, it would be difficult and ill-advised to begin a discussion on recent experiences and incidences of violence and racial injustice. The climate of heightened racial anxiety and fear not only made it extremely difficult to build the trust necessary to engage interviewees about the present period but there were serious concerns about the dangers posed by fieldwork that directly addressed the current situation in coastal villages.

We therefore decided instead to talk with older women and men about the civil disturbances of 1964 in order to consider how it is remembered and what that might reveal both about responses to the contemporary crisis and possible ways forward. Thus, whereas 1964 was originally envisioned as historical backdrop for a discussion of the effects of the current violence, we brought 1964 to the foreground. This decision seemed warranted for several reasons other than the dangers described above:

(i) As we looked at the recent violence, the continuing importance of the early 1960s as an important unresolved flashpoint whose legacy extends into the present became increasingly clear. In spite of the greater complexity of today's violence, several letters to the press made direct references to the violence of 1964 and even the President of Guyana publicly reflected on the need for a Commission of Inquiry into what happened in Guyana during the 1950s and 1960s)[iv]. Political scientist Perry Mars' argument on what makes an event or moment historically significant is relevant here. He says:

> By historical significance of an event is meant the introduction of something indelible about that particular moment in both its imagery and its consequential impact. The imagery of the moment relates to the preservation of a lasting impression in the collective memory of a people. The consequential impact refers to its potential to influence far-reaching changes in the society as a whole.[v]

(ii) The early 1960s, important as the period was, is an under-researched period in our history and the accounts and analyses that do exist betray a number of weaknesses. Our survey of the secondary literature that deals with 1964 suggests three trends:

(a) Accounts are partial: while it is important to recognize that no account of the disturbances of 1961-1964 could ever be completely exhaustive, what we are referring to here is material that purports to tell us about the violence or the main incidents, but that leaves out significant events. So for example an article might reference Indian eviction from Wismar but leave out the bombing of the Son Chapman (addressed in the findings below) or vice versa.

(b) Relatedly, opposing narratives are created: this is an issue we deal with in the detailed findings below, in which African and Indian are treated as entirely homogeneous communities, and where, depending on the writer's perspective, one or the other 'side' is assumed to be the aggressor, or where what are called the starting points or origins of the violence are different. What is most disturbing about

this tendency is how easily it appears to find an echo in contemporary discussions, and how easily the polarizations surface as explanation in relation to the current crisis and wave of violence in Guyana.

There is overwhelming silence on issues of gender and sexuality in relation to the disturbances, and specifically on the different experiences of women and men: we found little that addressed this in the 1964 context; while the official inquiry into the Wismar disturbances does note sexual assault of women, this is simply stated without any consideration of its broader implications (see 1965 Wismar Report: Report of the Wismar, Christianburg and Mackenzie Commission). Again, this is a silence that continues to shape the conversation about inter-racial violence and African-Indian relations in Guyana. Even in contemporary scholarship, with the exception of an unpublished document, *Notes on an Ethnic Conflict, Parts I & 2* by Andaiye*,* and an article on gender and violence in Guyana by Alissa Trotz[vi], both Red Thread members, there remains little that is substantive on these questions. The Guyana Indian Foundation Trust's report on the violence following the 1997 elections singles out the assaults on Indo-Guyanese women but treats them simply as race violence. Where discussions of violence or threats of violence against women do occur in the media, the conversation is hardly ever about women *per se*; rather, one gets the impression that 'women' get used to score points against the other side, to rally support or to whip up emotion and anger that can solidify community identity against the other.

This project is therefore a first attempt to conduct oral histories with women and men of both race groups who are old enough to remember the early 1960s, and to respectfully engage the narratives to see how they offer insight into both the current despair as well as potential connections that we might build upon in an effort to challenge the impasse.[vii] In this regard, we were particularly interested in the differential experiences of women and men, something that has not been remarked upon at all in the studies to date, with the exception of references to the sexual assaults of Indian-Guyanese women in one community, Wismar (which will be discussed later).

(iii) There is some official or other written record of the sexual abuse of women and girls

(iv) Potential interviewees we approached agreed to be interviewed, confirming our view that the distance of time had reduced (though not removed) the fear of speaking.

B. Main points of October 16, 2007 update

The work done since the update was outlined. The most important point made in the update was that "a constructive public intervention……is more than ever, clearly not a short-term mandate tied to a funded project, but must be undertaken carefully, ethically and sensitively. In this regard we have had to re-visit our earlier, pre field research plans to make our findings immediately public through workshops, press releases etc." We explained that while overall, people were willing to talk with us, there were very mixed feelings on the question of whether we need a public conversation in the country on the disturbances of 1961-1964, and that even those who think something needs to be done and said so publicly, have made it clear that this research carries a grave responsibility to ensure that how we present these findings is constructive and does not lead to a reawakening of the 1960s level of anger and resentment. We therefore said that our work in this area would continue past the end of the project and that we were thinking of "innovative ways to tell this story in ways that do not aggravate the current divide, but rather build on and multiply those other narratives (the cross-racial moments)…."

C. Objectives of the project as amended in the two documents

It is against this backdrop that the investigation explored what 1964 has come to mean for Guyanese from several of the villages directly affected by the events of the early 1960s, especially 1964. It is important to point out that Red Thread was not interested – in large part because we feel this would be a pointless exercise – in getting to the 'truth' of the events, that is to say, we did not believe that this work was primarily about settling what happened, identifying who were the perpetrators, establishing precisely how the civil disturbances originated or which side bore responsibility. Given the intense politicization, along lines of race, of the way that stories about 1964 circulate, our objective in this exercise is broadly to explore what people have come to understand as the truth of that period, recognizing that in this endeavour there are several 'versions' of the facts. More specifically, and zeroing in on the especially traumatic violence of 1964 in Wismar, we ask:

(1) What are the testimonies from victims and witnesses of the violence of the early 1960s, including the sexual violence and abuse of women and girls?
(2) Are there opposing accounts, both written and oral, of this violence?
(3) What impact did the violence and does the existence of different, frequently opposed ways of telling that history have on relations between Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese and in particular, between Indo-Guyanese and Afro- Guyanese women?
(4) What have we learned about the violence that offers us some insights into how we might work to address both the violence and the divisions among women and men, but especially women, from different racio-ethnic backgrounds that it helps to produce?

Beyond the provision of testimonies of victims and witnesses of this violence, and the specific analysis of the interview material, our original objectives remain largely the same, and our goal is to reflect on what these popular histories suggest for social action, and what kind of intervention might be possible. Specifically, in our conclusion and recommendations we consider the following:

(1) Bringing the issue onto the national agenda: Breaking the silence on 1964 and reframing the ways in which the discussion occurs.
(2) Challenging the attitudes of women who accept and even encourage sexual abuse and violence against girls and women of the other race.
(3) Working within Red Thread and among participants in the project, to discuss the issues underlying race/ethnic violence and the forms it can take against girls and women in Guyana.
(4) Empowering girls and women to talk about the past, and to find their own ways to demand justice.
(5) The work of building a network of women from all ethnic communities, supported by men, who will consistently organize against race/ethnic conflict and in defence of girls and women who are specifically targeted during such conflicts in Guyana.

IV. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATION

A. Sample

Given the extremely sensitive nature of this research, and the fact that there has been an overwhelming silence to date on the violence of the 1960s, we decided to draw on a small purposive and exploratory sample of Indian and African women and men from a number of communities that had directly experienced the violence of 1964. Drawing on their

extensive contacts (relying not only on their own familial and social networks but also on the contacts of women who were associated with Red Thread or part of its network), Red Thread women drew up a list of early potential interviewees. We relied on these lists, and also asked respondents to recommend at least one other household that they knew of in the area where adult women and men might be willing to speak with us. In a number of instances interviewees accompanied us to other homes and introduced us.

Given this sampling method, there were actually no refusals to our requests for interviews, although understandably there was, in some cases, extensive discussion before permission was granted about the relevance and importance of talking about 1964 in the present situation. We believe that the zero refusal rate is related to the fact that Red Thread was conducting the study, thus indicating the ability of the organization to transcend the racial divide (it is not associated in the public mind with one or other of the two dominant racial groups) as well as narrow partisan politics.

B. Internal workshops

Before going into the field, we drew up a rough interview schedule and held several extensive discussions at the Red Thread Crossroads Women's Centre with available members, highlighting the principal benchmarks that we needed to be aware of during the interview. The major dates we noted were: 1953 (political solidarity and then the suspension of the constitution); 1955 and 1957 (a split in the main party – the People's Progressive Party [PPP] - and the formation of a rival political party, the People's National Congress [PNC]); 1961-1962 (a strike and civil unrest culminating in the burning of businesses in Georgetown); 1963 (a strike and violence in Georgetown, the decision to implement proportional representation, strikes in the sugar belt that culminated in the 1964 disturbances, ending with elections under a system of proportional representation in December 1964). This turned out to be important as most of the younger women – who attended the interviews, initially just listening and eventually initiating and participating in the discussion – had little knowledge of the political landscape of the period, even though several lived in communities that had been directly affected by the violence of the 1960s.

C. Interviews

Between December 2006 and July 2007 we interviewed 44 women and men from a number of communities on the East Coast of Demerara: Wismar and Mackenzie (what is now Linden); Sand Reef, Annandale; Buxton; Haslington; Enmore; Better Hope; Plaisance. We also interviewed a few people from Georgetown and from the West Coast of Demerara (Den Amstel). Given the fact that there was so much moving around as a direct consequence of the violence, most of the interviewees had in fact relocated from where they had been living in 1964. Thus for instance, the Indian women we found in Enmore were originally from villages like Golden Grove and Victoria, those in Better Hope were from Plaisance, those in Annandale from Buxton. The village of Haslington seemed to be populated almost entirely by Africans forced out of Enmore.

Table 1 below disaggregates the profiles according to age, gender and race.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	NUMBER
African/Mixed[VIII]	25
Indian	19
Women	27
Men	17

45-60 years	5
61-70 years	16
71 years and over	22

* age unknown = 1

Interviews were conducted by the following persons: Alissa Trotz, who was present at and participated in all but two of the interviews; Andaiye; Joycelyn Bacchus; David Hinds; Nicola Marcus; Karen de Souza; and Halima Khan.

Interviews predominantly took place at the homes (and in a few instances, at the workplaces) of the respondents and lasted between one hour to nearly three hours in the case of the longest interview. In about five or six cases, spouses were present and also contributed. In one house, we found a group of five African-Guyanese women gathered for a prayer meeting (the attending minister was an Indian man), all of whom had moved to their present location as a direct result of the 1964 events, and had an hour long and wide-ranging discussion with them (this was not taped and is not part of the official count listed above). In a number of other instances, younger family members were present, sometimes hearing their relative talk about this period for the first time. The interviews focused on respondents' memories of childhood and descriptions of the communities where they grew up; on their recollections of the anti-colonial political atmosphere in the country; on their memories and personal experiences of the 1964 disturbances; on their sense of the connections between the 1960s and the current political climate in the country; and on whether they thought it was useful or relevant to talk about 1964 today. It is important to note that memories do not always follow such strict chronological conventions, and that these benchmarks became as much a way of keeping track of the interviews as an effort to return to explore specific moments with the participants. Our time in the field was stretched out, as we were not only negotiating respondents' busy schedules, but travelling out of town for most of the interviews and returning to Georgetown each day. Concern for security also determined the times at which we travelled. Thus, for example, for the interviews in Linden we left Georgetown at five-thirty in the morning, and tried to leave the community by around 1p.m. to ensure that we would not be on the highway at night.

In one of our encounters, a man told us: *"I rip out 1964. That's not something fuh remember, man".* It turned out that he had had direct experience of the violence, having been forced to leave a sugar estate community – where as a young man he was an up and coming cricket player with the village team – with his family. Later in the discussion we shall address the question of silence and forgetting, but this remark makes clear the difficulty of 'returning' to the period. As it turned out, he and all of the others who so generously shared their reflections with us, had much to say and carried their memories just below the surface of their everyday thoughts. As much as one tries, it seems impossible to *rip* it out. Given the nature of the recollections, it is perhaps not surprising that the interviews ranged from relatively detached recounting to highly emotional disclosures. Anger and pain were most common, and on several occasions interviewees – and interviewers – also broke down in tears. At times interviews changed track when it was clear that a particular memory was simply too difficult or painful to revisit. All of this indicates how the trauma of over 40 years ago has not been resolved, at both a collective but also individual psychic level. It suggests not just the necessity of intervening – ignoring this issue has clearly not led to it being forgotten or resolved – but also the importance of finding a way of sensitively addressing this period in a way that can promote collective and individual healing.

Most of the interviews were taped and transcribed. It was explained to respondents that they would not be identified, and that comments would be reported anonymously (all names have been changed). On a few occasions, interviewees expressed concern and asked to go off tape when discussing a particular incident. In one example, the interviewee asked us not to tape and even at some points in the interview instructed us not to write her comments down, even though she was speaking in most general terms about her experiences. Clearly, there continues to be a level of concern and fear surrounding a discussion of 1964, particularly given that many respondents feel that several of those who were directly involved or who helped to create a climate conducive to the violence, are still alive, in a context where closure continues to elude the Guyanese people.

D. Secondary data

In addition to the interviews, we also

- Gathered reports and information on inter-ethnic violence in the aftermath of the 1997 and 2001 elections.
- Compiled a fairly representative literature survey that refers to the 1964 period, in order to get a sense of how the disturbances are represented.
- Conducted an extensive search of the Guyanese newspapers available at the local newspaper archives at the National Museum in Georgetown for the period 1963-1964.
- Attended and filmed a ceremony at Hurudaia on the Demerara river, held annually (in July) to commemorate the Son Chapman ferry bombing that took place in 1964 which killed 43 African Guyanese women, men and children.

E. Final evaluation meetings

Meetings were held at Red Thread Crossroads Women's Centre at the conclusion of the interview process, including some members who had not participated in the field research, where we collectively discussed the process, what we had found in relation to our objectives, and follow up work (see final section of this report, summary and recommendations). A graduate student from the University of Toronto, Anna Bowen, also presented on the literature survey she had gathered.

F. Report-writing

The report was written by Alissa Trotz, in collaboration with Karen de Souza and Andaiye.[ix]

V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Our main findings from the oral histories we collected can be summarized as follows:

(1) 1964 continues to be a defining moment for Guyanese, the point around which there is general agreement that race divisions between Africans and Indians became extremely clear.
(2) The violence itself was central to creating a sense of African and Indian as separate, homogeneous and opposing communities.
(3) The two narratives we found in the secondary literature and in contemporary political discussions find their parallel in the interviews, with two sides arguing their own victimization and the aggression of the other.
(4) Women were affected in particular kinds of ways: their testimonies indicate that they carried the bulk of the caring, life-sustaining work during the violence; they were more likely to be isolated; keeping children safe was their responsibility; and they were not spared any of the forms the violence took and were also the victims of sexual assault or harassment.

(5) There were also consistent interruptions to the 'two narratives' that belied the sense of inevitable separation. Testimonies indicated that prior to 1964 villages and communities were racially mixed, and women were also central to the exchanges and inter-racial bonding experiences, stemming largely from their position in the household and their responsibilities as mothers.
(6) The violence that erupted in 1964 could and did not completely erase these experiences; in fact in every single interview, with both women and men, we found instances of support that cut across racial lines, defying the stark logic that would increasingly define Guyanese political life.
(7) There is, not surprisingly, an overwhelming cynicism with politics, and a general agreement that this has been the divisive factor that has altered the geography of coastal villages and instilled distrust between communities, *even as* those communities have themselves clearly internalized some of the stereotypes and narratives that lead to the fear and suspicion.
(8) The current wave of violence and the sense of a winner-take-all political scenario have done little to assuage racial fears. Thus while interviewees believed strongly that a younger generation needed to know about and learn from the 1960s, there was considerable concern that raising these issues could simply inflame an already tense political situation, and a scepticism that reconciliation would be a meaningful exercise.

These findings suggest a number of key issues for further action. Given widespread disillusion with the political process, we believe that an emphasis that moves from the large canvas and instead begins with communities can help generate a different kind of conversation. The references to 1964 that we have found in the media and secondary literature, and discussions of the contemporary violence in Guyanese society, have contributed greatly to polarized narratives that pit African and Indian Guyanese against each other. Put another way, initial conversations also underscored an overwhelming sense that the current impasse in the country is linked to an inability to resolve this historical conflict and the fears and insecurities it has produced in determining people's relations to each other.

At the same time, our findings have shown clearly that this is *not* the only story to be told, and they underscore the necessity of bringing alternative narratives like the ones we found in *all* of our interviews to the foreground, alternative narratives that highlight connection not division, on the solid foundation of the lives of women and men in various communities. What we see is that while memories – between women and men, between African and Indian communities – are shaped and in some ways limited in racially divisive ways, it is also possible, necessary and critical to identify moments of shared experiences and individual accounts of cross-racial solidarity that can interrupt current understandings of the past that have such a divisive legacy today.

We believe that gender will be key to this process; entire families were displaced, and given women's centrality in the household and kinship networks, their experiences index the kind of labour that was required to effect the shifts that took place in 1964, emotional and material work that remains largely invisible in accounts of the past. The discourse on African and Indian also obscures the divisions *within* each supposedly homogeneous category, and in particular the specific ways in which women were positioned during the violence. Hence the difficult but necessary

imperative to find ways of making all victims of violence visible, beyond the race divides.

Our work has shown that women's memories are filtered through their identities as mothers, family and community members and workers, and that this was something that was shared by all women. The caring labour that women predominantly performed before and during the crisis goes largely unrecognized. The challenge is to make it visible, to recognize how it potentially offers a different, *life-sustaining* vision, and to use this as the foundation for our anti-violence work within and across communities.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although our project shifted timelines given the demands of the contemporary political situation, our broad objectives remained the same:
(1) To address the issues underlying race/ethnic violence and the forms it can take against girls and women in Guyana;
(2) To lay the groundwork for building a network of women from all ethnic communities, supported by men, who will consistently organize against race/ethnic conflict and in defence of girls and women who are specifically targeted during such conflicts in Guyana.

In our original proposal another of our objectives was to bring the issue of the violence against women during times of conflict up from the underground and to force it onto the national agenda. As mentioned earlier, in the light of the material we collected, the anxieties that were expressed time and again in the course of our work, and the very volatile political situation that currently exists in Guyana, we came to recognize that the question of addressing these matters publicly and nationally must be thought through carefully, systematically and creatively, and *cannot* be tied to a funding project.

However, while we did not run a public campaign we did:

(1) put the issues out into the public arena, which has helped us to know the terrain on this issue much better;
(2) initiate, build and continue to build and train a network of women across race, with support from men, which is slowly but surely addressing these issues alongside the other work Red Thread is doing.

The findings of the research have led us to a number of recommendations for Red Thread's ongoing and future anti-violence work among women in Guyana. Our focus on 1964 has proven invaluable, because it has given a human face to a tragic period in Guyana's history (a perspective which is clearly lacking in the literature and public discussions); gives centre stage to the testimonies of victims and witnesses of this violence; pays particular attention to the experiences of women; has helped us to reflect on the contemporary legacy of the race divisions so violently expressed over 40 years ago; and offered us new insights into potential interventions to address these divisions.

The findings are also already shaping our work. To take three examples:
(a) From late 2005 to 2007 we held discussions on racial violence with women in six communities on the East Coast, two communities in Linden and one community in Georgetown, during which we identified the women who were clear leaders from each community for follow up work. We first met with them separately (i.e. as Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese women) before bringing them together. This group met weekly for four months then monthly to discuss all violence against women, including violence during or

arising from race conflict. After drawing out from them what they knew about the race violence of the 60s, we asked each to write a few lines on what they felt about it and then had one-on- one conversations with them on what they wrote in order to get a sense of what each honestly thought about women of other race groups and what myths they had accepted. This was followed by open discussion on what we could do to change these attitudes and the one-sided information passed down from generation to generation. To encourage the women to see past their divisions we drew on the findings of a time use survey we conducted in 2004 with 101 grassroots women which quantified how similar their lives were across race and the quantity and range of work they all did as unwaged caring workers. Some of the women from the time use survey are in the network we are building.

(b) Following the Lusignan massacre in January 2008, in which eight of the dead were women and children, and an abducted pregnant woman was identified as the rationale for unleashing a murderous assault on an unsuspecting community, Red Thread released a statement emphasizing how women are often used by all sides, and reiterating the need to move beyond paying lip service to the victims (an approach which still uses women without being concerned with women's experiences at all) to addressing the female casualties on all sides of a conflict that degrades, and does not sustain life. We also helped organize the first counsellors that were taken into the community.

(c) The testimonies from 1964 revealed how women often ended up isolating themselves in their households in an effort to keep their families, and in particular their children, safe. This insight allowed us to connect with what is happening to the women and those they care for in Buxton, the epicentre of the contemporary wave of violence in Guyana (see above). Through discussions we learned that, as in 1964, many women are 'shut-in', afraid to leave their homes and increasingly isolated. One of the issues that emerged was the fact that women and children were missing clinic visits or not seeking medical attention; consequently, and while we attempt to address the longer-term issues that lead to the shut-ins, Red Thread has been working to organize medical visits to the community and do a survey of people's medical needs, working with local community activists, a nurse, donated medical supplies and a team of volunteer doctors. We have conducted one session so far, and have applied for modest funding from the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada to enable us to sustain these visits for a period of one year

The project has also helped us use a different approach to encouraging other women not to be silent in the face of violence against women of another race group. In the past we acted on the assumption that silence meant complicity. Two examples are: (a) when violence after 2001 initially targeted Indo-Guyanese, a Red Thread member was the first Afro-Guyanese to publicly dissociate herself from the violence and any efforts to name it as 'African resistance' and was critical of other women for not doing the same; (b) during election campaigns in 1997 and 2001, Red Thread called for women to resist racial identifications that could lead to silence in the face of injustices experienced by women identified as belonging to the 'other' side. In comparison, in the aftermath of the recent atrocity in Lusignan, through face-to-face conversations with women in Buxton (as distinct from public calls) we realized that the 'silence' of these Afro-Guyanese women about the violence against a mainly Indo-Guyanese community did not indicate that they were complicit in what had happened, but that, as several women told us, they were afraid of retaliation against them and their families if they came out to lend public support to their grieving neighbours and frustrated that their own grief at having to live in the epicentre of the violence for the past seven years was not being acknowledged.

With the conclusion of this initial report, we are in the process of formalizing a study program out of intensive discussions we have been having inside Red Thread. The formalized study program will use the findings from our interviews, along with other material such as film and poetry about the defeat of the multiracial movement for independence in the 1950s by the colonial power; old newspaper coverage, and the lives and experiences of the study program participants, to talk about race before the early 1960s; address the violence that erupted in the 1960s and the ways in which it profoundly shifted where and how we live and interact; and examine how it can be changed again. Red Thread already has extensive experience, through the grassroots women's network we have initiated, working with individuals in different communities to carefully build connections and extend conversations that are anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-violence and that begin from the foundation of and lessons to be learned from women's life-sustaining labour. The study program and discussions within Red Thread on the 1964 project will result in a plan of action that draws on our history of working with different communities and that will be used to carry forward discussions with other groups.

Among the longer-term plans which we are currently discussing and which we will be seeking additional funding to realize, are:
(1) An accessibly written document for public consumption that will be based on the findings of the project, which will highlight the key issues we have raised here. This document will not be independently released but will be part of a broader campaigning effort.
(2) A series of children's books (a big issue is the effects of inter-generational transmission, how children might be learning and internalizing the message of racial fear, suspicion and insecurity), which help restore a sense of the history and vibrancy of interaction in coastal villages, and tell the story of the 1960s in ways that do not lose the threads of connection that were so pervasive in the interviews.
(3) A documentary (we have collected some footage already) which could be used as an educational resource for our work within and across communities, as a more effective way of publicly intervening in order to redirect conversations on race in Guyana.

PART TWO

DETAILED FINDINGS OF THE INVESTIGATION

Given the age of so many of our respondents (some in their nineties), it is clear that their hopes are for a resolution of the race conflict in Guyana, even if it is one that will likely not happen in their own lifetime. One woman hoped for reconciliation, saying the current wave of violence might lead right back to 1964, in which case she would "be glad if god tek me before duh time". We in Red Thread see their involvement in our project as passing something on to the next generation, and it is a responsibility we take most seriously. We will dedicate the products we make of the interviews we were given to H, the oldest resident of one of the villages we visited who celebrated her 95th birthday on July 24th, 2007, and whose heart remains in the community she was forced to leave in 1964, and to Mr. and Mrs. B., who shared with us the story of how they lost their 10 year old son to the violence in Wismar, and both of whom died in the final months of 2007.

A. Testimonies of victims and witnesses to the sexual and other violence

In relation to the early 1960s in Guyana there has not been a discussion of violence against women, including sexual violence. Indeed, both the historical record and the

interviews we conducted are somewhat unclear. Firstly, notions of what is proper and respectable might have shaped and even limited historical documents, such as media reports (we found no such commentaries in the newspapers of the time). This is worth considering given the discrepancy between the official inquiry into the Wismar violence – which recorded several instances of Indian women being sexually assaulted – and the relative silence on this question in the press. Secondly, the sexual violation of women is never an easy topic to discuss. Shame leads to silence or denial. Given this, our interviews were intended at this stage to simply gather information that could help us understand these issues and suggest strategies for working with communities. In this regard, we are interested in the ways in which women remembered 1964, and in understanding how gender inflected their memories/understandings of and responses to the disturbances.

What we can say from experience that is widely shared is that a community under attack feels differently about the violence meted out to women, often in the form of rape or other kinds of sexual assault, than it does about the violence done to men in the same community. This is not surprising. When women – the carers and reproducers, the backbone which holds the community together - are the target of violence, the security of the entire community is undermined. Its very survival is threatened. When women are attacked, everyone else in the community, that is, men and children, also know deeply that they too are under attack.[x]

With the significant exception of the first disturbances in Wismar on May 25th, 1964 which was a powerful memory among Indian-Guyanese respondents, none of the women we interviewed reported being subject to sexual threats or assault, and for the most part insisted that such attacks were infrequent. In Wismar we have clear descriptions of women being victimized as symbols of a group identity: *"Men were beaten…it happened to both sex, male and female but then the women were raped in addition to the beating"* (Wayne, Mixed, 65).The following testimony is from a woman who witnessed the assaults: *"So dey dragging dese Indian girls by the hair, and dey raping dem…out on the street. If yuh see dey catch one Indian girl, is about twenty of dem round she…I know one girl, I can't remember her name, an Indian girl…we in de same school. She came running out..and they scramble she...*" (Indra, Indian, 52)

A man who identified himself as mixed and who grew up in the community, in describing the events described incidents of rape said: *"I am talking about being violent to persons of another race, stealing from dem, burning down…setting their house on fire, raping of the girls and women, not just raping, but gang raping*."

In a few other interviews, women stated that they had heard of occasional cases of rape in other places (*"No. No raping in our place. Raping passed other ways, what I hear about, but not here"*), as in the case of an African woman, referring to incidents on both the West and East Coasts of Demerara in which sexual assaults were committed by both Indian and African men:

"The Indians dem over the West Coast they terrorise the black people by setting fire to yuh house and when yuh jump out dey bore yuh with pitch fork and I was very, very much afraid…one lady she dead now too, she living over the West Coast…she say the coolie men dem, she was begging dem not to kill she, she seh dey proper handle [rape] she…she seh she had to tek it with a smile…she had to get away out of the area, she seh they proper handle she…when she do get the chance she come back to she homeland. She come back [on the East Coast]…and some Indian…would tell yuh dat boys handle

dem too, rape dem…[when dey] hustling to go dey way, dem black boys ketch dem and handle dem". (Jean, African, 76).

Accounts of sexual assault and mutilation served as a kind of symbolic marker of what the African or Indian community had suffered.

For Africans, the murder of a highly-respected, mature couple in Buxton, the Sealeys, was recounted by almost every African Guyanese we interviewed, and in several instances we were told that the woman had been sexually assaulted, and that her husband's penis was found in his mouth. In fact, this image of the (literal) emasculation of the man (and by extension, the African community) was also repeated as something that had happened to other African men. In one case we were told it had happened to a man whose murder was reported in the newspapers. This was not mentioned either by the newspapers, or by any of his immediate family members who we interviewed at length.

Among Indians, it is Wismar that stands for Indian humiliation and victimization. Unlike the Sealey murders, victims are not identified by name, but like the circulation of the story of that elderly couple among Africans in Guyana, Wismar was known and mentioned by almost all of the Indian respondents. The expulsion of the community and the beatings were mentioned, but it was the sexual assault of women and girls that was most significant in our conversations and that was singled out as emblematic of the depths of suffering and degradation of Indians at the hands of Africans.

There were also one or two other circulating accounts that referred to the condition of women who had been beaten or killed (not sexually assaulted) as young, pregnant etc. For example, there was one description of a pregnant Indian woman who died from burns after the car she was travelling in on the East Coast road was stopped and set on fire, and a story of a pregnant African woman who went down with the Son Chapman launch). Very rarely were the ages or marital status or otherwise of men mentioned, suggesting how violence against women and children is used to index a more wanton disregard for human life, or elicits a heightened sense of horror and revulsion.

Another striking gender difference was that isolation was a recurring theme among the women. Only in one or two of the interviews did any of the men talk about being fearful (this is not to say they were not, but rather that for men of both races, such admissions might be contrary to accepted understandings of masculinity), or about staying indoors. In contrast, fear was a common emotion expressed by the women we interviewed, and shutting oneself indoors a logical response:

"I didn't use to go no way, I deh in me house I ain't walking too much alone, and yuh know it tek me time before I walk in the Indian area, I does tell meself when yuh passing dey going to run out and chop yuh and nobody would see…so it took me many years [after the cessation of hostilities] before I go through" (Jean, African)

"Me nah travel pon de road. Me go and lock down in meh lil place, get meh baby and me deh deh a good time. Till everything come back normal and meh see people start to go around and move around and ting and talk, and me see tings running up and down..me nah go out no way. Me cyan hear nutten, me nah come out a house. When me deh in deh me nah come out" (Nadira, Indian, 79)

Without exception, it was women who talked consistently about, and provided specific examples of the lengths to which they went to keep their families, particularly their children, safe. If for men the emphasis was on maintaining an income, or organizing to move house from one village to another (an activity that women participated in fully), it was women's labour which was specifically directed towards the care of children and it followed that it was on them that the burden of protection would predominantly fall: one woman dating the start of the violence in her community to the day her child was born; others taking their children at night to sleep with neighbours; one woman sending her children away to stay with relatives; another recalling the beams on her house breaking when the bulldozer began moving it to a squatting area adjoining Buxton, and having to spend the night in the middle of the street in an area that many felt had become hostile to Indians: *"Once moving me house break at the middle street, and lef dere overnight, and me stay [in the house] whole night and wonder if anybody go come inside…wid two children."* The following examples highlight vividly the lengths to which women would, and had to go, during the disturbances. The first case describes the night when Mary (African, now 72), then pregnant and with two infants, realized she would have to move out of Enmore (several people she knew had been killed or had had their houses burned down):

"I begin to get afraid now and frightened dey kill me too, you know? Because…they running…by the railway and swinging the cutlass and yuh hearing the noise. Saying 'black man, come out!' so, so, so, so, so. So we decide to go through the back [escape through the back of the house]. And when we open de door to go through de back dey did running at the back too so we had to lie down in the garden the night.
Interviewer: So you came out of the house
Mary: *"Yes, and go around the back, and…we just siddown weself in the yard"*
Interviewer: With the children? How old were they then?
Mary: *"Yes, one was two, one was one...and I cover their mouth and tell them keep quiet…*
Interviewer: If they caught you…
Mary: *"No, no everybody would have died. Everybody they would kill. Everybody…early [next] morning…we had to run away. The two small one run in front of me and the one in the belly, and we had to run and come from Enmore. Straight to Golden Grove."*

In the second example, the story of Meena, an Indian woman now 68 years old, is remarkable in its resemblance to Mary's:
"Dem run me husband out [of the village] and all ahwe nah see he back ah whole week. We had to move out..we go ah we neighbour dem at de back and we stay deh…mef lef me own house, me cyan stay deh, 'cause sometime dem find out dat me live deh, and me husband nah deh home…night-time we does sleep in de bush…me tek dem children den me go through de back ah me neighbour and siddown
Interviewer: At night your neighbour also sleep in the bush?
Meena: *"Yea, ah de back house, all ahwe does come out and deh in ah de bush*
Interviewer: How did the children make out? Were they crying or scared?
Meena: *"Dem lil…nah, dem nah cry, dem belly nah full? Ahwe nah feed dem? But dem lil, dem nah know wha ah go long, ah ahwe dis gat fuh know…den after couple day, ahwe deh deh about three or four day, den we call dis boy name Green and was a Black boy but ahwe well knowing wid he and he gat a car, he been drive a car, and he carry we out to Better Hope".*

<u>B. Opposing accounts of the violence</u>
A critical problem in ethnic, religious and other communal conflicts is the creation of opposing narratives by the various sides. As a result of our wide-ranging literature review

and newspaper search, we noted how both the media and other written accounts contributed to producing such narratives. To illustrate this point we draw from *The West on Trial*, the autobiography of Cheddi Jagan (former Premier and President of Guyana, Indo-Guyanese), and a more recent report on *Civil Violence, Domestic Terrorism and Internal Security in Guyana, 1953-2003* by David Granger (retired Chief of Staff of the Guyana Defence Force, Afro-Guyanese). The examples relate to the violence in Wismar where on May 25th, two days after the discovery of the bodies of the Sealey couple in Buxton (see above), Wismar/Mckenzie erupted in attacks against Indian residents. According to the Wismar Report[xi], there were two Indian fatalities; roughly 200 houses and businesses of Indians were looted and destroyed, principally by fire; and 57 cases of assault were recorded, including "six cases of rape, with some victims being successively raped by several men." With exodus the only option, approximately 3000 individuals (1249 adults, 2150 children, all Indian) were taken by launch to Georgetown (the mode of transportation to the city at the time was via the Demerara river) and resettled elsewhere, mainly along the East Coast of Demerara.

Six weeks later, on July 6, a passenger ferry owned by an African-Guyanese businessman Norman Yacoob Chapman, on its way to Wismar from Georgetown, was destroyed by explosives after leaving a stop at Hurudaia on the Demerara river. All of the victims - the bodies of 35 women, men and children were taken to Mackenzie while 12 others were missing or unidentified - were African. Following news of the horrific explosion Indians who had either remained in or returned to the community since May were again assaulted. Five Indians were murdered and seven injured at Wismar; an Editor's note in the Wismar Report says two Africans met their deaths while involved in looting.

The recounting of the events in the literature has tended in the main to selectively focus on or emphasize either the Son Chapman or the Wismar assaults. Returning to the historical accounts of Cheddi Jagan and David Granger, the latter does not mention the violence against Indians in Wismar but says "The most alarming slaughter of the 'Disturbances' was that of 40 Africans on 6 July at Hurudaia in the Demerara river as they traveled in a motor launch to Mackenzie." (5). On the other hand, for Cheddi Jagan, it is Indian victimization that stands out: "the strike culminated on May 24 in the massacre of Indians at Wismar…" "The whole Indian population….uprooted, property torched, 2000 houses, business places destroyed, 1800 made homeless, many beaten, some to death." Jagan goes on to note that "Women and even children were raped and otherwise savagely maltreated," and that "Police and armed volunteers did nothing to help" (308-309).[xii] In *The West on Trial* the explosion on the Son Chapman is treated as an accident, one which led to instant retaliation: "The Son Chapman, a launch transporting passengers from Georgetown to Wismar, then sank after an explosion; more than 2 dozen persons, mainly African workers and their families at Mackenzie, were drowned. This led to immediate reprisals against Indians; 2 of a small number of Indians who had returned to Mackenzie were murdered" (310).

The order of events, the numbers hurt or killed, the victims, the perpetrators, the emphasis, all different. In the narratives that have now been 40 years in the making, these accounts exist in relation to oral histories passed generationally, and the past is reordered and reworked by each group in order to argue the actions of their group as retaliation for the atrocities of the other. The violence against Indian-Guyanese in Wismar, and specifically the sexual assault of women and girls appear to have been wiped clean from the memories of African-Guyanese, while for Indian-Guyanese they remain stark as an unforgivable assault on the whole community. For African-Guyanese it is incontestable

that the Son Chapman was bombed by supporters of the PPP; Indian-Guyanese, when they mention the Son Chapman, tend to describe it an accident that resulted from the PNC smuggling explosives to Wismar/Mackenzie on the launch.[xiii] Interviewees also seemed familiar with these opposing versions of the past (as we shall see, their own recollections do not escape these representations either), and the political ends they served, as the following comment illustrates:

"The history of dis country seem to got two side to it, depending on who write it. Depending on who write the history, we got two strain of history. So unless we get these things factually down and put it out in an objective way, I don't think we can get anywhere….you think the politicians… got any interest in, say a Truth and Reconciliation Commission? 'Cause dem is not part of the problem? Dem is not the ones peddling two different kinds of history?" (Wayne, African)

C. <u>The continued impact of the opposing narratives</u>

These separate narratives continue to have a critical impact, both in relation to how public discussions of 1964 – when they do occur – are framed, as well as the ways in which interpretations of the period structure responses to the current violence. In relation to the first, one of the most striking observations is how each side claims its martyrs of the period. While there is no general commemoration that takes place, there are annual rituals that occur with the support and sponsorship of the two main political parties. The PNC, dominated by African-Guyanese, commemorates the bombing of the Son Chapman; the PPP, dominated by Indian-Guyanese, the death of Kowsilla.

During our time in the field, we attended a ceremony for the victims of the Son Chapman bombing, which takes place at a cleared space on the banks of the Demerara River at Hurudaia. Small launches and speedboats had been hired or had donated their services to transport Linden and other residents to the site, where efforts have begun to build a memorial and plaque with all of the names of the victims (much of the clearing work has been spearheaded by women). Members of the regional government office in Linden were present, and speakers on the programme included senior members of the PNC (including the party leader, Robert Corbin). Not only were all of the attendees African-Guyanese (at least 100), but many – particularly young people – had been mobilized to come by the youth arm of the party, which plays a central role in organizing the event each year. We were told that invitations are extended each year to the government and PPP, but these are never acknowledged. There was also much public criticism of the fact that there is no official recognition from 'the other side' of Son Chapman.

The event itself is highly politicized, with speakers going over the events of 1964 that led to the explosion, discounting PPP narratives that suggest responsibility for the bombing lay with the PNC, and linking 1964 to current African-Guyanese marginalization and the need for resistance. One speaker criticized the narrow-mindedness of the current administration's tendency to selectively remember martyrs, apparently unselfconscious that the Hurudaia event had itself done precisely what it spoke out against. In particular, the violence that Indian-Guyanese had been subjected to in Wismar/Mackenzie in May and July 1964 were conspicuously absent in the public pronouncements, referred to once and then only to justify the July assaults as retaliatory outbursts from grief-stricken African-Guyanese in the aftermath of the sinking of the ferry.

These commemorative practices become occasions to rally political support, leaving little space for participants beyond these sharply drawn political lines, and foreclosing the

possibility for alternative memories to provide an opportunity to reach across zero-sum divisions. As one of our interviewees commented, *"People keep remembering the period but instead of it being a period to guide them to a better future, the politician I think remind them of these incidents so that they can continue to think racially and behave that way."*

The country witnessed a similar polarization in the analysis of more recent events, and specifically in relation to the violence that erupted on the streets of Georgetown following the 1997 elections and again in 2001 (leading to a more generalized escalation of crime up to the present). Significantly, and arguably for the first time, gender entered the discussion,[xiv] illustrated not only by the assaults against Indo-Guyanese women, but also by the frequency with which 'women' became the basis upon which competing claims for racial justice were framed in letters to the local newspapers after the 2001 elections and in 2002 as violence escalated and widened; one such letter read:

> When shamelessness is greater than decency, and strength is measured by an insatiable appetite to prey upon women, children and the innocent; the notoriety of Georgetown and some ignominious villages on the East Coast, will be indelibly stamped upon the body and minds of the victims. Georgetown, the raped capital, bleeds…(Stabroek News, May 8th 2001).

The more recent carnage which ushered in 2008 – particularly the murder of five children and three women and three men, in Lusignan, a village with a predominantly Indian Guyanese population, followed three weeks later by the slaughter of 12 men of different races in Bartica - has led to perhaps the most explicit references to the civil disturbances of 1964 and entreaties to Guyanese to ensure that it is not repeated.

Statements named one side as victim and the other side as aggressor in what is described as a racial war. They indicate the ease – almost reflex gesture – with which the two narratives continue to furnish a conceptual frame through which the current crisis in Guyana can be interpreted.[xv]

D. <u>What respondents feel about whether and how we might work to address both the violence and the divisions among women from different race backgrounds</u>

What we heard in the testimonies was not that the violence was an extreme manifestation of divisions between Africans and Indians, but rather that the violence was *necessary* to produce and sustain polarization.

Without exception, interviewees' recollections were divided into a 'before' (which in the case of the older interviewees extends long before the 1950s) and 'after' the violence and the tensions leading up to it. This dividing line might be not so much a faithful representation of past realities as it is a way of demarcating, or bracketing, the horrific events of 1961-1964, of characterising the violence as completely out of step with a country in which peaceful mixing had been the order of the day. Across communities, interviewees readily described attending each other's ceremonies, and noted the ease of inter-racial mixing, at school and socially:

"Everybody go to school together – like friends, everything is negro and Indian, dey neva had no problem really…when school was out and so yuh never used to really go out of Linden, holiday yuh would stay and spend in Linden, with your friends and so..we used to go to party, yuh know all them Indian girls…we used to go to school dances and so, and

was sheer negroes we dance wid. We used to mix a lot. It was real nice" (Indra, Indian, 52).

"I miss the love, yuh know? We all live good together, And [the Indians] would come and dey would dig dutty and dey come down and mek curry, dey get the Indian wedding and all ahwe go" (Sarah, African, age unrecorded)

In several instances where Indians and Africans farmed on the backdam of the villages along the East Coast, we were told that they would support and look out for each other:
"We used to plant and farming garden and rice, mind yuh cattle, mind sheep…The Black people and we just live nice. Dem a call a you, yuh can pass and go call a dem, yuh know, yuh deh deh at the backdam and yuh pass and call for dem. Dem would always answer yuh and so." (Arti, Indian, 75).

Some of the interviewees volunteered occupational integration as an instance of crossing the racial divide, as for example at Enmore, the largest sugar estate on the East Coast of Demerara and the scene of African expulsion in 1964, where both groups in the community were employed by the estate, and where women tended to work in the weeding gangs.

For the most part, residential neighbourhoods were described as fairly tightly integrated, with *"Black, den a Indian, den another Black, den another Indian"* living side by side. And even where interviewees said that there were 'more Blacks' or 'more Indians' living in a community, to them this did not make it an African or Indian village, largely, we would submit, because the dominant memory was one of connection across race/ethnic and other divides.

Although several of the men recalled having close inter-racial friendships as children, in general the men tended to offer general comments about living good together with your neighbours, and their remarks also stressed interactions in what we have come to understand as the public domain – the street, the shops - as in this comment:
"Prior to dose times [1964], people in the community would meet for discussions and never had dis grouse or racial tings dat would bring about a division in the society…people used to be on the streets day and night, dose who imbibed would find themselves maybe lying on the road, brace up on a lamp post and still wake up with everything intact, money, clothes shoes…dat was how it was" (John, African, 65 years old).

In contrast, **the women's recollections of inter-racial mixing primarily revolved around the household or private domain, or emphasized support by women for women in the carrying out of their household and maternal responsibilities:** *"Me children dem, me leff dem and go wuk in Victoria backdam…me used to leff me children dem wid Black people…and dey just look after de house till me come back and look dem children"* (Sumintra, Indian, 74). Indeed, **what stood out in these testimonies was the abundance of examples in which interviewees offered their personal experiences (in contrast to the men) of gestures of support, friendship and empathy, both as children and then later, as mothers**.

The idea that Africans and Indians were irreconcilably different did not mesh with people's everyday experiences, so the growing sense that these were two groups whose interests had to be pursued separately was imposed from without. Respondents were unequivocal that party politics was to blame for the disturbances (and the state of the country today),

and cognizant of the class tensions that get muted in the construction of monolithic notions of African-ness and Indian-ness, in ways that obscured various kinds of relations across both communities. For them, at the end of the day it was poor people who ended up being drawn into what one respondent called a war against each other, and who benefited the least.

"Jagan and Burnham go mix up and drink and thing, when me and you a destroy one another…they hold you and sold you and when the trouble come…a me and you deh in the trouble. Dem free" (Mary, African, 74)

"Politicians cause dis ting yes…we had apan jhaat, coolie fuh coolie, black man fuh black man, so them ah go…you a think fuh you, fuh you race, black people a think fuh dem race." (Arti, Indian, 75)[xvi]

But if women and men were unanimously clear on the dangers of what one man called 'politricks', it was far more difficult to think about or make sense of the betrayal between and within communities that occurred more than 40 years ago, without also recapitulating the very language of separateness and division. The intensity of recognizing that one's life, and the life of one's loved ones are in danger, has lasting repercussions: *"Yuh think is joke, fuh know you and yuh loved ones wake up dis morning, and in a matter of hours dey get kill? And duh was total killing".* One key to this division is the erosion of trust, which emerged as a central theme across the interviews, and clearly relates to the feeling that bonds of neighbourliness had been violated, in some instances irreparably. The loss of trust was most strongly articulated by those who had either witnessed or directly experienced violence (as an Indian couple said, echoing each other, *"Tings can't come back, can't come back at all, no more. Never can come back. Never. Never! Can come back")*:

"I don't want to hate anybody. But I will only fool mehself if I say that that streak of hatred doesn't pass through me. I love Indians but there are times when…..yuh know what it is to see yuh brother walk out of a home and the next time yuh see him in a coffin, is without a face." (Rose, whose brother was murdered and her family evicted from Enmore shortly after).

The lasting effect of this break cannot be underestimated. While **in many cases respondents (significantly far more women than men) said they maintained friendships in their old communities, or even began to visit again once the situation had calmed down**, there were also several who had never returned. What each side has chosen to remember is significant. It parallels the two narratives found in the scholarship and the popular press, which render the other side's suffering invisible and only their aggression visible.

A similar polarization also emerged across the interviews in which the broader political landscape was blamed, but those from 'the other side' (African people or Indian people) were described as causing the disturbances, or starting it, or being responsible for most of the violence. In these accounts, interviewees would represent their group predominantly as victims, and the opposing group as aggressor:

(1) "Black people. Nah duh time Black man ah mek trouble, kill people, shoot people"
(2) "The first ting dey do, the Indians start killing de black people when dey go to wuk in the farms"

Where one's own hostility was acknowledged, it was cast as self-defence:

(1) *"The Indians start wid dis ting dey call appan jhaat. And right dere the racial thing started and den the negro going to say well [if is] race for race yuh can't live next to me and so it started*".
(2) "Yuh en had choice. Yuh had to do what yuh had done".

There is, as we have said earlier, a general cynicism about politics as usual, by which is meant the political status quo of the past 40 odd years (*"I tell yuh, if the party politics still playing so, I sorry for now generation, I sorry for the generation coming, I sorry for my grandchildren, because dis country will not get better")*. **When asked, women and men both stated strongly that a shift was needed (even if people were less optimistic that it could be achieved). As one of our respondents said, *"We got a great divide now, me ain't know how we going get back together…All two set of people, all two suffer is ignorance to me, I does say is ignorance, how you going to call for separation? I don't feel unto now - I going to dead just now - but I don't feel we could carry on weself just so without having this brace [interdependence]"*** (Jean, African, 76).

Is it possible to resolve this without finding some way of addressing and bringing closure to the disturbances of 1961-1964? In one or two cases, individuals said they tried to simply not think about what had happened: "*Me nah really want, yuh know, recall dem ting dah back again. Me seh all duh death yuh pass through."* Most of our respondents, however, said it was impossible to forget (and the details of all of the recollections show just how close to the surface the memories remain), with some making connections with the ongoing situation of crime and violence that Guyana currently faces, as in this poignant excerpt: "*That door is always dere because in a moment of silence, when yuh sit down to tink, is everything does keep running through…and yuh know what raise it more, this last time here? When the killing and so did goin on."* (Indra, Indian, 52)

In general, the interviewees believed that young people and children needed to know, and what was interesting was that women and men, African and Indian, across location, unanimously made generational distinctions in which it was the current crop of youth who lacked respect and education. With very few exceptions -in only a few cases did women note that youth were learning and internalizing some of these racialised ways of thinking from elders in their homes and communities – did any of our participants reflect on the relationship between an earlier generation's shortcomings and the present context for children in Guyana. Nor did they seem willing or able to connect the disparaging remarks they made about youth with the fact that it was their generation that had experienced and participated in various ways in the disturbances of 1962.

Clearly remembering will not be easy. Almost everyone agreed that the process would be difficult, and could in fact be counter-productive, as one man put it: *"Ah gone tell yuh something. Remembering dose massacres dat pass in dem 63/64…a lot of people lose dey loved ones. Don't watch at people deh quiet*". Another woman addressed the issue of how it would be received by a generation that had not directly witnessed the disturbances: *"When yuh tell dem now it would just build up a hatred again or so…it might be good for dem, yes, [to learn about] what went on in years gone by..[but] it got some people like dat, it got people like dat, it would affect their inside, to know what their forefathers had to go through"*. The question is, has the absence of a dialogue prevented it from leaving a legacy that bleeds into the lives and interactions of a generation of people at least twice removed

from the events? As one respondent memorably offered, "*Dey got a lot ah negro and Indian jumbie walking roun' dis place."*

Guyana today is a country where current configurations of power and social divisions are assessed against the backdrop of a political climate that continues to promote distrust, stereotyping and a sense of absolute racial division, and from which neither women nor men remain immune, notwithstanding what we believe to be their genuine desire to address or even transcend differences.

"You and I might still believe we ought to live together. And I can only see Guyana become something when these two races come together, and under no other condition. God himself would have to step in. And god is in control anyway. But this…feelings, you can't trust anybody, and if it continue it's a negative something. It's a negative something because one dey get the pressure from the other, and the other they going feel now, like meh nah tek it…and we come from the top, right away down to the bottom, you try to help and the same body you try to help come bite yuh hand or knock yuh" (Gary, African, 82)

"I think the country need a healing. And if dis country nah get duh healing dis country will always have mistrust and you always will have one people looking at de other suh. Because right now, if yuh look at the statistics of the country yuh could see clearly, who getting rob and who doing it…so how can you have dis trust?" (Bacchus, Indian, 65).

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE ON AMENDED PROJECT

1. PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, ETC		
Preparatory meetings, piloting and reviewing interviews		
Travel: 48 woman days	109,290	
Stipends: 43 woman days x 4,000	172,000	
Conducting interviews		
Travel: 65 woman days	182,890	
Stipends: 300 woman days x 4,000	1,200,000	
Transcribing interviews	50,000	
Subtotal		**1,714,180**
2. SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, ETC		
Newspaper archives		
Travel: 20 woman days	30,000	
Stipends: 20 woman days x 4,000	80,000	
Travel to Son Chapman memorial event	35,000	
Subtotal		**145,000**
3. TAKING FINDINGS OUT/BUILDING NETWORK		
Weekly discussions following interviews		
Travel: 176 woman days	363,200	
Stipends: 176 woman days x 4,000	704,000	
2 Network meetings		
Travel for 2 network meetings (60 women 2 from Interior)	223,000	
Snacks	185,000	
Childcare	60,000	
Accommodation and meals (2 from Interior) 3 days, 2 nights	81,000	
Travel community meetings 18 woman days	36,000	
Subtotal		**1,652,200**
4. DVA training		
Travel (2 training sessions in each of 5 communities)	80,000	
Acc & meals, 2 facilitators, 4 days, 3 nights	76,000	
Subtotal		**156,000**
5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION		
Final evaluation meeting		
Travel: 11 women	22,700	
Childcare:	15,000	
Quarterly review meetings		
Travel review meetings 12 woman days	33,000	
Subtotal		**70,700**
6. ADMINISTRATION		
Coordination (Project Coordinator, secretarial support, communications)	892,000	
Facilitation 23 days	230,000	
Subtotal		**1,122,000**
	TOTAL: 4,860,080	

Previously submitted accounts: $3,148,540
Total expenditure: 8,008,620
Amount received: 8,008,500

[i] The other large groups are Amerindians or Indigenous peoples, and people of Mixed race.
[ii] We variously use the terms “Indo-Guyanese” or “Indian Guyanese” or “Guyanese of Indian descent”, and “Afro-Guyanese”, “African Guyanese” or Guyanese of African descent. Interviewees, like the majority of Guyanese of all races, use the words “black” or “negro” when referring to Guyanese of African descent and occasionally “coolie” to refer to Guyanese of Indian descent.
[iii] Wismar/Mackenzie, along with another community called Christianburg are together referred to as Linden, but since the name Linden was given to the area post 1964 (in 1970), we use Linden when we are referring to our current work, and Wismar/Mackenzie whenever we are referring to events that took place in the 1960s. We have however, left Linden in where respondents themselves used the term to describe 1964.
[iv] See “President favours truth commission to examine 50s, early 60s,” Stabroek Daily News, Thursday, January 17th 2008
[v] Perry Mars (1994) “The significance of the disturbances, 1962-1964,” *History Gazette*, No. 7, p.2.
[vi] from D. Alissa Trotz (2004), ‘Between Despair and Hope: Towards an Analysis of Women and Violence in Contemporary Guyana, *Small Axe: A Journal of Criticism* 15: 1-25.
[vii] A letter to one of the newspapers makes a somewhat similar argument: “As a nation we have learned nothing from our history or the history of others. We have become a sicker nation each passing day. The gunmen who carried out the attacks did so because as a nation we have rendered ourselves too helpless in the face of racial imperatives. We can continue to self-destruct and kill ourselves out of civilized existence, or we can reach for something better. We can continue to live on the illusion of Indian and African superiority or reach for Indian-African solidarity and racial equality. We can continue to murder our children in the name of power or empower our lives to rise to the challenge healing. In the end only our collective will to rise above petty racism will save Guyana.” Stabroek News, Thursday January 31st, 2008.

[viii] A note on Mixed, which is a very amorphous category. Mixed includes those of Indian and African parentage (called dougla in local parlance). People also use the word “Mixed” to describe themselves less to indicate inter-racial connection than to distance themselves from being Black in a social structure where skin colour, hair texture and facial features are seen as having important symbolic and material value. And self-descriptions can also shift depending on context and who one is speaking with. Clearly the existence of this 'mixed' category speaks to a level of intimate sharing among communities in Guyana, and among our respondents. In our discussions of the violence some interviewees also mentioned violence against mixed persons - in descriptions that suggested the violence was intended to punish the victim for representing, through their own body, a transgression of an increasingly divided racial status quo. In these accounts, 'mixed' represented a threat that had to be dealt with. This certainly raises the question of whether those who identified as 'mixed' demonstrated significantly different positions or had particular memories of 1964 that stood apart from the other respondents, including individuals who were married to or living in a 'mixed' relationship (defined here as a relationship in which one partner was African and the other Indian, about five of the respondents). While our sample is too small to detect any marked differences, in these cases there was slightly less evidence of a tendency found in the other interviews to generically condemn or claim victimhood for one side. Overall, however, what struck us most was in fact a remarkable similarity across all categories (African, Indian or Mixed), of sharing, connection and solidarity in the midst of polarization.

[ix] Alissa Trotz is a Red Thread member who teaches at the University of Toronto. Through research funding in relation to the civil disturbances of 1961-1964, she was able to join this project in Guyana, participate in designing and conducting interviews and the archival research, and hire a graduate student to help with the secondary literature survey since so many of the publications are unavailable in Guyana. She also interviewed several Guyanese now resident in Toronto, and while these have partly informed the analysis, they have not been drawn on for this report. David Hinds, who teaches at Arizona State University, also joined Red Thread for some of the interviews and discussion while in Guyana in 2007 for research purposes.
[x] Of course, the fact that communities tend to feel differently about violence against women during communal violence does not necessarily translate into a meaningful recognition of women’s contribution to sustaining communities. Secondly, actual women and their experiences get excised or silenced by the most public face of community agitation over what ‘its’ women have suffered (the proprietary symbolism of the pronoun ‘its’ is deliberate here), that is, when such assaults are acknowledged at all.
[xi] "Wismar Report: Report of the Wismar, Christianburg and Mackenzie Commission (1965), Commissioned by the Governor of British Guiana, Sir Richard Luyt, September 1964).
[xii] According to the Wismar Report, Janet Jagan (wife of then Premier Cheddi Jagan) resigned from her position as Minister of Home Affairs following the May attacks, citing non-co-operation from the Governor and police in protecting the vulnerable Indian community from assault.

[xiii] For an example of this reasoning, see the article “Who sunk the Son Chapman, really?” on the website Guyana Under Siege, http://www.guyanaundersiege.com/History/wismar/Sunchapman.htm (accessed August 7, 2007)

[xiv] This section is taken from D. Alissa Trotz (2004), ‘Between Despair and Hope: Towards an Analysis of Women and Violence in Contemporary Guyana, *Small Axe: A Journal of Criticism* 15: 1-25. “The Guyana Indian Foundation Trust (GIFT) was formed in 1998 as a direct consequence of the violence unleashed against Indo-Guyanese The welcoming address to launch GIFT singled out an incident in which a young Indian woman had been stripped by mobs in Georgetown, as a catalyzing factor behind the decision to break the silence on the violence affecting the Indian community. GIFT placed advertisements in the media in March 1998 inviting people to bear witness to the events that had transpired. Some 228 testimonies were obtained (224 from self-identified ‘Indian Guyanese’). It was estimated that over 1,000 persons had experienced physical violence, with over 10,000 experiencing some curtailment of their freedom of movement in Georgetown. Some 37% of those attacked were women, over half of whom indicated that they were “both physically and sexually abused” (no men reported sexual abuse of any kind). The GIFT report states, “In this regard then women were twice victims. As Indians they were victims and as women they were victims”. All of the 228 testimonies pointed to Afro-Guyanese perpetrators; in 40% of the cases, it was alleged that Afro-Guyanese women were involved in verbal and physical assaults against women and men.”

[xv] If Lusignan (predominantly Indian, seen as a PPP community) made it fairly easy to find racial explanations for the violence, the murders at Bartica three weeks later made this a difficult argument to sustain (the victims, all men, were from across the racial spectrum, the community tends to vote for the PNC in the elections), but the suspicion and distrust across these sharply drawn lines has made it just as hard to kickstart a genuine national conversation on crime and violence.

[xvi] Apanjaat (a Hindi word translated in Guyana as 'vote for your own' or 'vote for your kind', also spelt in Guyana as Apan Jhaat) was a term that would increasingly become used to instil racial division and persuade communities to vote along racial lines, and is used popularly (including among our respondents) to describe Indian (by extension, PPP) organizing. There is no consensus on where the term originated or how it was used; for instance Ralph Premdas (Ethnic Conflict and Development: The Case of Guyana, Aldershot: Avebury 1995) says that apanjaat referred to organising in one's community first before appealing to others to join. Maurice St. Pierre (Anatomy of Resistance: Anti-colonialism in Guyana, 1823-1966, London: Macmillan, 1999) suggests that it was increasingly used in conjunction with PPP activism in the later 1950s; on the other hand in his political biography, Cheddi Jagan (The West on Trial: the Fight for Guyana's Freedom, GDR: Seven Seas Books, 1980) refers to Apan Jhaat (he defines it as 'literally, own race') only once (p. 114), and then to say that racist and anti-PPP Indian leaders originated the term to frighten away Indians from the PPP in the run up to the historic 1953 election.