

Violence in Fiji: Presentations from a Panel Discussion on Violence in Fiji held on 28 August 2004 at the Cathy Hotel, Lautoka¹

Keynote Paper: Violence in Fiji

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Introduction

Professor Robbie Robertson, Chairman of Tonight's seminar, panelists (Susana Tuisawau, Prue Rouse, Daniel Urai, Dr G. Goundar, Moses Driver), ladies and gentlemen. I would like to begin by acknowledging the Taukei-ni-Vanua of the site of this event and to thank you for your presence here this evening. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr Ganesh Chand for his efforts in the reprinting of 'Violence of Indenture in Fiji' and to both Ganesh and you for your organisation and facilitation of tonight's events. We have tonight a distinguished group of speakers who can speak authoritatively in their chosen fields of expertise, my address seeks to provide a broad overview on 'Violence in Fiji' and some possible ways of reducing it.

Defining Violence

Violence in the world today takes many forms. We see, hear and read about violence daily. The information technology and communication (ITC) revolution brings to us a continuous flow of all sorts of information including those about violence. Some of these are starkly presented to us on TV.

In the contemporary period we see images of battles and the consequences of car bombs in Iraq in the aftermath of the ill advised and illegal

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invasion of that country. In the Dafur region of Sudan we are shown the wretched conditions of more than a million people, almost entirely women and children, who have been displaced and turned into refugees by a genocidal war.

The media reports numerous other manifestations of violence. Fiji featured prominently in the international media in May and October in 1987 and again from 19 May, 2000 as a place characterised by political instability and inter-ethnic violence. The country has been haemorrhaging of its professional, skilled and business people since the first military coup. We have lost more than 10 percent of our population. Amongst those who left are some of our best doctors, nurses, teachers, police officers, electricians, plumbers – the sorts of people that no country can ill afford to lose.

Violence can be defined as doing harm. This can be physical as causing bodily injury to person or to property. It could be emotional and psychological. It could result from verbal exchanges or verbal abuse. It can be deliberate and it can be inadvertent.

There are many dimensions and levels of violence. Psychologist, psychoanalysts, sociologists, political scientists and legal scholars as well as theologians and philosophers have researched and reflected on the many aspects of violence.

Violence occurs at the level of the individual person as in self-inflicted violence – suicides for instance. A common type is interpersonal violence, which can take the form of domestic violence usually perpetrated by men against women and children. Child abuse, including sexual abuse and paedophilia, can be regarded as interpersonal but when paedophilic groups/rings target children then it becomes inter-group violence.

At the inter-group level, violence can occur between ethnic groups, not necessarily because of cultural or religious differences but as a result of competition and/or conflict over economic and political resources. Cultural differences or ethnicity is then used to mobilise support and to escalate the conflict. These conflicts can become intra-state level conflict when state power captured by an ethnic group is challenged by those excluded from participating in organs of decision making. This form of conflict and violence has been the most widespread form of political violence following the Second World War.

Interstate conflict and violence as in cross-border armed conflicts and invasions continue to occur. In the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan oil and natural gas reserves appear to be the main drawing card for the Anglo-American invasion.

Human beings have shown themselves to be most kindly and caring of each other. In some societies such as that of the Hopi of North America and Tibet most forms of violence were unknown. But humans have also shown extremely vile and violent tendencies. They have been described as ‘the cruelest and most ruthless species that has ever walked the earth’ (Storr, 1970). Violence appears to be ubiquitous – so we speak of domestic violence, street violence, school violence, workplace violence, sports violence and state violence including police brutality.

I believe that each one of us, with the exception of psychopaths, has the capacity for peacefully dealing with all our affairs as we are capable of ‘losing it’ and succumbing to violent behaviour.

Johann Galtung, a prominent Professor of Peace Studies, identifies two forms of societal violence. The first is social violence, usually not deliberate, that results from the existing system of power and social inequality. These are likely to be based in the maldistribution of economic resources and access to opportunities. The repressive arms of the state - the police and the military - are often used to maintain these inequalities. As a result police practice may target an underclass or even a whole ethnic category as potential criminal threats to the well being of those advantaged by the system. This explains why a disproportionate number of black people are in the jails of America, Britain, Australia and New Zealand. This explains why ethnic Fijian youths are disproportionately represented in our imprisoned population. The system works against them.

The second form of societal violence is the periodic ‘explosions’ that are experienced when individuals and groups react to systemic oppression. These may be personal, inter-personal, or inter-group, or against the status-quo. They range from mental breakdown and suicide to riots and rebellions. Expressions of this type of violence have been collated for the indenture period in the book that we are to launch tonight.²

An outline of the history of violence in Fiji

Far from being a Hobbesian nightmare characterised by ‘short brutish’ lives, pre-historically the smaller communities and polities of indigenous people develop very elaborate systems of dispute settlement, alliances and protocols to reduce and avoid conflict and violence. Inter-tribal warfare did take place but these resulted in a small number of casualties. Proto-states and theocracies in the form of confederacies emerged in conjunction with missionary and settler influences and the introduction of

² Naidu, V (2004) *Violence of Indenture*. Lautoka: FIAS.

firearms. Ascendant chiefs sought to establish their suzerainty over larger territorial areas using their newly acquired fire power. Previously limited practices such as cannibalism became more widespread involving many more victims.

At the psychological level, the proselytisation of indigenous people with its clear demarcation of a period of 'light' or raraba against a period of 'darkness' or buto may have caused considerable harm to the psyche and confidence of later generations.

Internal warfare continued in Fiji with the arrival of settlers, this time over land and the form of government for the country. Even following the Deed of Cession and the established of colonial rule, warfare continued. The so called 'little war' against the Colo-people only ended in 1876 with the 'Armed Native Constabulary', led by eastern chiefs playing an important role in the pacification. The so-called 'devil tribes' had rebelled against those who sought to dominate their affairs for a number of reasons. One of these was the spread of the measles epidemic that killed a large number of indigenous people. Because of the lack of immunity to common European diseases many Pacific Islanders died over the period of early European contact. Indigenous Fijians were not spared. It is estimated that the original population numbered over 300,000 when Abel Tasman first sighted islands of the Fiji group but declined to around 84,000 by the 1921 Census.

Ultimately the system of indirect rule during the period of British colonialism which encompassed communal taxation, segregated village settlements, native regulations and the associated native administration, together with missionisation contained and confined the indigenous people. This form of apartheid received the support of indigenous leaders and chiefs as their positions were reinforced by the colonial administration.

The chiefs and white administrators mediated virtually all the indigenous Fijian interaction with Fiji born people of other ethnicities. Extremely detailed and oppressive regulations controlled their activities from sun-rise to sun-set. A basic human right enshrined in the UN Human Rights Declaration - the Freedom of Movement - was denied to them for 86 years of British colonial rule. The regulated system was only reformed in the 1960s. This is a system of historic 'bantustan' and a form of systemic violence against the broad masses of our indigenous people. However, the dominant historical discourse is that the native policy and administration that it sprouted was designed to 'protect' the 'native' people.

To meet the labour requirements of labour hungry planters, the enslaved indigenous rebels of Lovoni were sold to work in the nascent plan-

tations. To their number were added Melanesian labourers, blackbirded or kidnapped from the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and islands of Papua New Guinea. These sources of unfree labour proved inadequate.

Between 1879 and 1916, more than 60,000 Indian immigrant labourers were brought into Fiji by the colonial government to satisfy the planter and especially the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's (CSR's) demand for labour. It is noteworthy that the Indian Indenture Labour System was brought to an end by Indian nationalists in India. Neither the colonial government in Fiji nor that of India sought to end it. The planters continued to cry for more labour until the depression of the late 1920s.

In built in the plantation system was a system of power that gave plantation owners, overseers and sirdars almost total control over the lives of the workers. While the individual personalities of planters did determine the fate of workers, the system itself was oppressive and was driven by greed. Social violence including verbal abuse, beatings, imprisonment, even killings, as well as sexual abuse, were systemic. In the 1880s depression, force labour killed Melanesians 'like flies' and Indian revolts were brutally suppressed. Over-tasking was common place. For the bulk of the 40 years of Indenture or Girit, the average man and woman worker did not earn the 1/- and 9p per day, respectively, that they had been promised.

The death rate amongst workers was high as was the number of deaths amongst their new born babies and children. The relative shortage of Indian women created a situation of extreme vulnerability for them. Assaults, rape and murders were regularly committed against them. They were also trafficked by unscrupulous men.

In contrast to the detailed control over indigenous Fijians the colonial administration left the 'Indian coolies' largely in the hands of planters. Colonial governors and officials invariably sided with CSR and other employers. Genuine demands by workers, who were largely of Indian ethnicity, were given a political hue and suppressed as such, with workers' leaders deported. Both Mani Lal Doctor and Sadhu Bashist Muni were forced to leave Fiji.

The privileged white minority in Fiji, which always had a say in government of the country during the colonial period, feared an alliance of all coloured/black people. Any sign of this was squashed. Thus the leader of the widely supported Viti Kambani, Apolosi Ranawai who sought to bring indigenous Fijians into mainstream economy and society, was banished and eventually died in exile.

However, in spite of all its efforts at divide and rule, colonial offi-

cialdom and the European business community could not stop the inexorable process of workers of different ethnicities in Fiji making a common cause. This happened in 1959 when oil workers stopped work in their bid for increased wages. The arrogant attitude of the oil company managers resulted in an escalation of the dispute. When the workers came out on the street to protest, the police armed with riot gear, used baton charges and tear gas against them. The workers retaliated with stones, and European-owned properties were damaged. The Fiji military was called out to quell the civil unrest and indigenous leaders spoke out against their people following 'foreigners'.

While social and economic processes, including urbanisation, have resulted in the disintegration of segregationist structures and the racial division of labour, bringing all of Fiji's people together, at the political and bureaucratic levels the ethnic divisions are slavishly maintained. The disadvantaged elements of Fiji have responded to narrow ethnic nationalism on the one hand and to their class position on the other. Since 1975, indigenous nationalism has been part of Fiji's political reality. It has been expressed in violent forms in 1987 and 2000. The victims of this violence have been largely Indo-Fijians. In 2000 we had the unprecedented and shameful situation of having displaced communities in our shores.

Those who chose the politics of class have also been the subject of harassment and violence. On three occasions now we have experienced democratic political processes being violently cast aside by those who appear to have impunity in this society and who have the power to change the goal posts to suit themselves.

Contemporary Manifestations of Violence

Besides a 'culture of silence' in Fiji, we also have a 'culture of intimidation' and a 'culture of fear'. Threats and physical assaults to keep others in control are common place in our communities. Parents beating their children; teachers assaulting their students; security guards and police intimidating and beating up people - the barrel of the gun has taken precedence over the ballot, making politics a risky business. And employers threaten and intimidate their workers; man beat women; school boy bullies harass their fellow students. The middle and upper classes live behind fences and bars out of fear of home invasions. Rural folk are vulnerable to thefts of their crops and animals as well as to beatings by thugs. Security has become a growth industry.

The skewed distribution of income and widespread poverty in Fiji is a form of low-grade social violence that has many consequences. Unable

to fully develop their capabilities the children of the poor who have put up with child poverty find themselves seriously disadvantaged. There is widespread youth unemployment. This has led to substance abuse and a drug culture amongst elements of our youth population.

Inter-personal violence, including violence against women, is partly the outcome of the gender system which is integral to the social arrangement that we find ourselves in. At the person level, while Indo-Fijians and other non-indigenous people undergo considerable mental stress and are the main victims of suicides, ethnic Fijian young men hit out at their exclusion and find themselves in large numbers in our prisons.

Political violence and instability in 1987 and 2000 have blighted the lives of many people but especially young people. The labour market has not expanded; only 2000 of the 17000 school leavers annually find formal employment. It is ironical that in May 2000 unemployed and underemployed youths formed the foot soldiers of politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen who sought to maintain the status quo.

Until Rabuka's military coup our political leaders felt reasonably comfortable with keeping the so-called races apart. Indeed in both 1987 and in 2000 coups, the leaders of the two main ethnic categories were physically separated to ensure that the old colonial heritage of divide and rule could be maintained by our indigenous leadership. Since then there has been a resurgence of provincialism in national politics, fostered by narrow-minded and myopic political leaders. We have entered a dangerous phase in our post-independence history. The events and fatalities associated with the 2000 putsch, coup and mutiny gave us a stark glimpse of an early stage toward the disintegration of the nation state.

In his recently published book, Winston Halapua (2003) describes the militarization of Fiji society and the politicisation of the military as a worrying tendency. Indeed, having an ethnically exclusive army in a multi-ethnic country has been a recipe for political instability and state sponsored violence.

With the erosion of both, social norms and the respect for the rule of law, we, including our children and grandchildren, have become vulnerable to unscrupulous predators from outside. Paedophiles, drug syndicates, people traffickers, illicit arms dealers, rapacious con artists and foreign consultants have made their way here.

Land tenure issues remain a major bone of contention in our society. Indo-Fijians and other non-indigenous citizens are mostly landless and many indigenous Fijians have moved from their vanua and are also landless. The expiry of agricultural leases has seriously compromised the

sugar industry and in peri-urban areas vakavanua arrangements are likely to prove inadequate. There has been a steep rise in property prices and rentals. Conflicts and violence over land matters have already occurred and are likely to worsen in the future.

Reducing Violence in Fiji

To reduce aggressive and violent behavior there is a need for us to accept that violence is not healthy and is the cause as well as the consequence of many of our social problems. These include those relating to poverty and unemployment, social exclusion, racism and sexism. Inclusive public policy, civic education, exemplary leadership and the rule of law are at the heart of reducing conflict and violence.

For sometime now, I have reached the conclusion that middle aged and old men, with rare exception, are not to be trusted with political power and leadership. They have caused us untold harm. As we reflect on electoral reform, it is time to have systems of representation that more fully reflect the demographic characteristics of our people. Young people should hold positions of power and responsibilities; the disabled must have a direct say in governance and there should be a proportionate representation of all political viewpoints in the national parliament.

The state must play an active role in addressing vexing questions of all disadvantage people. Our taxation and redistribution policies have to be friendlier to the broad masses of our people.

Opportunities for training our youth so that they can pursue meaningful livelihoods, need to be revolutionised by a massive restructuring of our education system and investment of new resources. Estranged and alienated youth, especially young men, have great potential to do harm. If given guidance and opportunities the same youth can use their potential in most creative ways. The fact that since the early 1970s more than 80 per cent of our prison population comprises indigenous Fijian youth must be major source of concern for all of us. How can society ensure that this state of affairs is not prolonged? This must be pivotal to any effective resolution of our 'security problem'.

Intercultural and civic education should be made compulsory. All students should be exposed to Fiji's history and understand its indigenous as well as its multicultural origins. The human rights of all our citizens, enshrined in the Constitution, must be respected and enforced. There must be zero tolerance of inter-personal violence including violence against women. Effective public campaigns against suicides and social exclusion, for instance those who have been infected by HIV/AIDS, as

well as reproductive health diseases, should be undertaken regularly.

Forward looking measures to grow the economic cake and to share it more equitably is vital if we are to prosper and eschew conflict and violence. As the rule of law underpins both local and foreign investment decision making, the contradictory signals that emanate from those who wield political power must be reduced.

Incidentally there have been some misgivings amongst some indigenous leaders that the use of the term Indo-Fijian is tantamount to cultural genocide and the cause of considerable of psychological harm to indigenous Fijians. I note that there is a healthy, if belated, debate underway on the subject of a common name. As a Fijian born Indian I look forward to the coinage of a name for people like me that may enhance my sense of belonging here.

We, as responsible citizens and caring people, should think of ways of how we can work towards a less violent and better Fiji. More often the way we bring up our children, the values we impart to them and the way we treat our neighbours, have greater bearing on these matters than we think. Through such behavior and by educating ourselves, we would be better placed to deal with our tendencies towards violence and the different forms of violence that we encounter. Fiji, like other countries, has a violent past but there is no reason for this state of affairs to continue.

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A Police Perspective

Moses Driver

Ladies and Gentlemen, I speak here this evening not only as a law enforcement officer but also as a concerned member of the public against the rising tide of violence in Fiji.

You will all be very much aware of the prevalence of violence in this country just by following the media reports in our daily newspapers and television news bulletins. Not one day passes without a newspaper report being made on some violent crime being committed in some part of Fiji. What may alarm more people though is the attention and emphasis given to such violence by the newspapers, radio and at times, the TV.

Whether the increase in violence is caused by the increase in the actual commission of violent acts themselves or the mere increase in volume of reported violence, one thing is clear: violence must be stopped.

You will no doubt have realised by following media reports of violence in this country, or anywhere else for that matter, that the occurrence of violent acts by its perpetrators will almost always attract the attention and interruption of the Police. Whether the violent act is manifested in physical violence such as assault and robbery, or other forms such as quarrelling and intimidation, and whether it is actuated by an individual or a group of people, the Police have a duty to interfere in and arrest the occurrence of such violence.

In the short time that I have, I intend to focus on the primary role of the Police Force with respect to violence in Fiji, particularly on violent crime. I will highlight the types of violent crimes that have been recorded by the Police as well as present some statistics on them. Finally, I will address the areas that the Police Force are targeting in its effort to curb violence and the means of achieving that objective.

Police Perspective on Violence

Under Fiji's Penal Code, which is Chapter 17 of the Laws of Fiji, various types of violent conduct are criminalised and prohibited. These include common violent offences such as murder, manslaughter, assault and rape, and less common ones such as rioting, hijacking, piracy, mutiny and treason.

The Fiji Police Force is directly responsible for the prevention and detection of such violent acts or crimes. Under the Police Act, the Police

Force is tasked with the maintenance of law and order, the preservation of peace, the protection of life and property, the prevention and detection of crime and the enforcement of all laws and regulations with which it is directly charged.

Violent crime take up a sizeable portion of police time, personnel and resources. The investigation of violent crime such as murder and rape, for example, do require the specific allocation of resources and investigators. Although there is no set timeframe for completing investigations of such crime, in general, there is always an emphasis placed by the Police Force in quickly finalising all investigation on serious violent crimes such as murder.

Police Statistics on Violent Crimes

I turn now to highlight the types and numbers of violent crimes recorded by the Police Force in the years 2001 to 2003.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines violence as the ‘quality of being violent; violent conduct or treatment, outrage causing injury’. In other words it relates to an unlawful exercise of physical force. Therefore, it is correct to say that violence is directly linked to crime. It is a catalyst under which crime is perpetuated.

Police statistics in 2003 showed that an average of 46 crimes were committed in a day or that a crime is committed every 30 minutes throughout Fiji. In all a total of 16,949 crime reports were reported to police last year (2003).

Most of these crimes were committed in the Southern Division where 6,951 such reports were recorded, 5,668 were reported in the Western Division followed by 2,316 in the Northern Division and 2,014 for the Eastern Division.

This does not sound too good. However, the good news is that crime in Fiji has been experiencing a steady decline over the years. Last year’s statistics showed an overall decline of 2% over that of 2002. For the purpose of this seminar we need to look at statistics that relates to violence against people. In 2003 assault cases accounted for 82% of all reported offences against the person. There were 4,109 such cases reported last year, which was a 10% drop over the 2002 figure of 4,523 for such cases.

Homicide

Unlike assault and serious assault, homicide offences are usually regarded as the most heinous in our society. As a result police devote much energy in resolving such crime.

Last year there were 53 homicide cases investigated, representing a

42% increase over the 2002 figures. Sexual offences accounted for 3% of all reported crime offences last year. Overall there were 479 sex-related cases investigated in 2003 compared with 511 cases in 2002 representing a 4% reduction.

Suicide

There is also a need to take into account suicide and attempted suicide cases in relation to violence. Most suicide and attempted cases directly relate to domestic violence, notably between husbands and wives or parents against children. Peer pressure on children to perform in school, or fixed marriages, also contribute to the commission of suicides.

In 2003 there were 102 cases of suicide and 93 cases of attempted suicide giving us a total of 195 cases. This compares with 109 cases of suicide in 2002 and 121 cases of attempted suicide giving us a total of 230 cases reported in 2002.

Police Initiatives

The big question is: what are we doing, or what is being done, to bring violent crime under control? We are all aware that the Fiji Police Force is embarking on a new direction in order to maintain law and order in the country. We have now:

- (1) Adopted a 'no drop' policy when it comes to violent crime.
- (2) Embarked on more educational awareness programs through broadcast and print media.
- (3) A more vibrant visitation exercise as part of our community policing effort.
- (4) Established a separate Tourist Police Unit to protect the interest of tourists.
- (5) Enlarged police visibility and presence in urban centres; and
- (6) Increased police patrols and speedened responses to calls for assistance.

We have a common enemy known as violence. There is, of course, much more that could be done. Given time and resources the Fiji Police Force is positive we can reduce violence on our streets and homes considerably. However, we cannot do this on our own. We need the support of the community. This is a fight that we must take to the perpetrators – so that we can make Fiji a safer and peaceful place to live. Thank you.

Moses Driver is the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Fiji Police Force.

Violence in Schools

Susana Tuisawau

First of all, I would like to thank the organizers of this panel for providing an opportunity for us to publicly talk about something which has increasingly become prevalent in this country. I have been specifically asked to comment on violence in schools, but before I restrict myself to discussing the nature of violence in schools, I wish to make some comments about violence in general in Fiji.

My first comment is that violence is a learned behavior that a young person picks up when he or she sees other people using violence to get their own way. Secondly, violence becomes prevalent when people see that violence is or appears to be sanctioned by law. That is, if those who are supposed to pull up people for committing violence do not do so either because they do not have the means to apprehend them or because the law enforcers look the other way. Thirdly, and this is the most dangerous one, is when young ones see violence popularized as a show of machoism or heroism as they see violence in films, cartoons, advertisements, video games and even news.

Many adults tend to think that violence seen in films and cartoons and video games are harmless. But what is happening here is that the little malleable mind is being already introduced into a culture of violence at a very vulnerable age of his/her life as the more often he/she sees violence and uses video games to out-shoot the foe the more he/she becomes desensitized to violence.

I, therefore, would like to express from the outset that if the homes in Fiji are more cautious and sensitive in the way they handle TV viewing video games, and more importantly, handling anger in the home (so that it does not translate to physical and verbal abuse), our young ones will have a better chance to grow up in a non-violent home and will themselves create a non-violent environment in which to bring up their families.

Another point is that if youth outside the home do not see law and order being enforced properly by policemen when violence takes place, then that gives a false impression in the minds of the youth that some violence is tolerated or legitimate and sanctioned by law.

Hence discipline in the home and in the community, and apprehension of violent behavior by police, are absolutely vital as it is through default of

discipline that violence can be learned and be accepted as normal.

Efficient police presence i.e. through the visibility of the police on foot, is a good preventive measure for violence and any criminal activity for that matter.

Culture and religion are two excellent institutions that maintain and inculcate values that prevent violence and maintain discipline without the need for a police presence. For example, we do not have police stations in the villages; but you will hardly find violence happening in the village because of this inherent feeling of responsibility and respect for one another that culture and religion have imposed on village life. As we know culture is a sociological agent that makes people conform to a sociologically acceptable norm of behavior in society.

With urbanization and the increasing absence of parents from homes, not to mention the increasing number of children from villages living away from parents as they pursue higher education in urban centres, a good percentage of Fijian urban homes are simply extremely crowded and incapable of dealing with disciplinary issues. More importantly, the youth no longer get the individual attention and cultural talk that is often part of their village elders' responsibilities. Youth in urban areas are quite often left on their own and usually, are not encouraged by the busy adult relative whose home they are in, to go to church or to be part of the youth fellowship of the church.

What we are seeing is the break-down of the influence of culture and church values because of the break up of families through urbanization. Violence often becomes the means of survival and of ensuring control and supply for a good number of youth, especially the unemployed ones.

Violence in schools is of two forms, the most prevalent of which is that committed by the teacher through the use of physical force on students, while the second form is that imposed by a student on another student or by students on other students.

Worldwide, both forms of violence are recorded to be increasing. As an educationist my view is that no form of violence should ever happen in schools. In Fiji it is most unfortunate that a good number of teachers have been pulled up for using their hands on students for various reasons and which to me is totally inexcusable.

Another form of violence which is disturbing and which has also featured in the schools - although it is not too common but happening all the same - is sexual violence. To date we have 11 cases before the courts.

Fiji used to have a policy that stipulated the use of corporal punishment by the Head Teacher or one to whom he or she delegated the responsibility

to discipline a student. This legitimizes the use of the strap on students when a serious offence such as bullying, is committed. With the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the legitimacy of this policy now becomes obsolete and any use of force on children by any teacher now becomes a criminal act.

However, despite this, teachers continue to hit children. The reasons that this continues to happen in the schools are many but which unfortunately, can be mainly attributed to two main factors. Firstly, the inadequate way or attention Fiji is giving to the selection, preparation and resourcing of its teachers, and secondly, to the unnecessary, all encompassing focus of the curriculum in Fiji's schools on public examinations.

However, before I explain these, the point must be made that generally no student is a bad student or sets out to be a disciplinary problem unless he/she cannot understand the teacher or feels the teacher does not understand or like him/her. Psychologically, all students will respond positively to teachers if a teacher is positive, shows care and genuine love for the student and creates a supportive learning environment.

In Fiji, mismanagement of disciplinary problems in the schools often lead to violence by teachers because of the following factors:

1. (a) The lack of proper teacher training that focuses on preparing teachers to utilize methods of teaching that bring about enjoyment to learning. No student will be a disciplinary problem if he/she enjoys learning. Furthermore, a teacher who enjoys teaching is unlikely to lose his/her temper and hence will not have cause to be violent.

A good number of teachers while undergoing their teacher training programmes, are exposed to exciting student centred methods of teaching that bring joy to them and their students as they teach. However, when they reach the school, the poorly resourced classroom and exam-oriented focus of the curricula do not allow them to use these methods. The demand and pace required to meet public examination requirements often take the joy out of their teaching. They tend to focus only on getting their marking done and covering their syllabus. Activities that build a closer relationship with their students are often not used as these take up time. So, the fast pace, poor resources (such as lack of text books) and even poor students who cannot afford to have their own books or their own stationery and as a result, disturb classes while borrowing them, often trigger off an already frustrating and volatile situation to which the teacher often succumbs by using his/her fist or hand.

- (b) This also often indicates inadequate selection procedures and preparation of teachers by the teacher training institutions. On the selection process, there must be a method of selection that can identify trainee teachers who have a well-rounded character and who are selected not only on academic criteria but on socially acceptable behaviour indicators and past experience. There must be a matrix that can identify potential sexual offenders and eliminate these at the selection process.
- (c) As I have stated, far too much emphasis on examinations and academic development of students rather than on a curriculum that develops the total person can easily take its toll on the teachers. In Fiji there is no room for peace education which can create and develop peace loving persons.
2. The lack of resources in schools.
 3. The absence of an on-going refresher course for teachers. This is vital especially as the professional isolation of rural teachers is a real danger to the enhancement of teachers' professional attitude.
 4. The lack of preparation on the part of the teacher can often bring about frustrations. A well prepared teacher usually does not lose his/her cool and will have great satisfaction in achieving his/her learning objectives and outcomes.
 5. Poor educational management skills and lack of professional leadership in the schools, for example good time-tabling, mentoring, professional seminars, counselling, and school clubs, can build up a good professional environment for teachers. Even small class sizes can encourage a good, close, discipline-free learning environment.
 6. Crowded facilities in schools.
 7. Overloading of teachers.
 8. Lack of professional development programmes for teachers through their departmental heads.
 9. Inadequate non teaching time to build up student/teacher relationship and the lack of extra curricular activities.

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Domestic Violence – A Private Sector Perspective

Prue Rouse

I do not make any claim to expertise in the area of domestic violence in Fiji. But I do have almost thirty five years of observation since I first arrived to live in Fiji in 1969.

My first memory of being a witness to what could be described as an act of ‘domestic violence’ was at the Lautoka Market around 1975/76 when I had just arrived back from three years in New Zealand. During our time in New Zealand, my husband had attended Victoria and Massey Universities while studying for his commerce degree. I had had my consciousness raised considerably of what was then called the feminist or women’s rights, movements. Prior to that, apart from having read Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* and Simone de Beauvoir’s book *The Second Sex* – I was really unaware of what we now think of as advocacy for gender equality.

This period spent in New Zealand – the first country in the World to give women the right to vote was pivotal for me. It helped me view what I witnessed at Lautoka market that Saturday morning as unjustified violence, something to be abhorred. Without thinking or hesitating for a second, I strode up to the heavily-set male Fijian who was pummelling a terrified woman (also Fijian or Polynesian) and told him to stop. He smelled of liquor and it never entered my mind, as it would now, that I too might be attacked.

Bystanders at the market looked on as I shouted again at him and to my amazement, he stepped back, looked at me in a hazy way and then stumbled off. As he left there was a noticeable change of atmosphere and people began once more to chatter among themselves and go back to selling their wares.

This is not something to be recommended as an example; most certainly not today. We seem to have moved into another plateau of experience of domestic violence in Fiji since the 1987 Coups. Statistics I have from the police for the period 1999–2003, and for Vuda Point area for January–July 2004, suggest an escalation of violence taking place within people’s own homes. This is also allowing for reporting which may have been below the norm during 2000/2001.

Fiji is now considered internationally to be within the ‘Coup Cycle’. That is, we have become one of the 27 countries worldwide which have suffered political violence to overthrow a legitimately elected government.

No country to date has left this cycle once within it. I say this not to depress the audience but to emphasize that we have an obligation as Citizens of this country to prove this received opinion wrong.

The history of violence of all kinds in Fiji's history has proved disastrous for containing it within the home or family unit. In 2003 for instance, my statistics show that there were 5 murders of family members by other family members: 2 Fijian and 3 Indian. But there were also 590 cases of 'Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm' within Fiji families – the most common form of domestic violence. In 2002 this figure was 645 – so there is a slight decrease here but the murder rate makes up for it. I feel that suicide in Fiji is now so prevalent that it also constitutes a measure of 'domestic violence'. We know that suicides and attempted suicides are taking place in all communities. I myself attended the funeral of a young Fijian male, who had a family and good job, just two years ago. This is tragic and a sign of a diseased society – I use 'disease' here in its original meaning. The low status of women has not helped us. Yet, we cannot now claim that all women suffer from 'low status'. Back in 1975 this may have been so with very few exceptions. Now we have ladies as Justices of Peace, women doctors and teachers, head teachers and even Bankers not forgetting women lawyers and CEOs in the Civil Service. There are role models for women to follow, but how many are able to do emulate them?

Catalysts for Domestic Violence

Some of the catalysts for domestic violence are:

- ? Low status of women across ethnic communities.
- ? Financial dependency.
- ? A culture of 'macho-ism' or 'rambo-ism' which in its extreme form is exhibited in coups d'etat where gun or 'Might is Right' mentality rules.
- ? An inability of women to be assertive rather than aggressive about their needs.
- ? An inability and a disinclination by men to listen to women's needs or to meet them.

These factors are not exclusive to Fiji. They exist in other societies around the world where education has not catered to the need for people to 'change with the times'. Men and women are partners in life and in development. Without such a partnership arrangement, there will be no sustainable development. For this reason, gender equality must be inculcated in

schools and men especially must be educated to assist and mentor women into equal status with them.

My own sons, now in their thirties, who began their education in Fiji but continued it in England at a co-educational boarding school, Dover College, are far in advance of their father in their deep understanding of the need for equality between men and women, boys and girls.

Private Sector

I am from the Private Sector. I run a business with my youngest son, Dan Rouse, which employs men and women of all ethnic groups. There are more men than women but we do make a conscious attempt to attract well educated and ambitious young women who wish to work in what was formerly ‘a man’s world’ – the world of security services. Domestic violence can do untold damage in the world of work and costs businesses millions of dollars annually. Absence from work due to domestic assaults represents a financial loss not only to the parties directly involved and their children; it can also disrupt patterns of employment and the smooth running of enterprises. Governments need to take these costs into account. Legislation needs to reflect the widespread consequences of violence in the home. Remember that not only women are the victims. My statistics for Vuda Area alone this year show:

- Family dispute
- Husband assaults wife
- Son assaults father
- Mother assaults daughter
- Disputes between brother and sister
- Son assaults mother

This is for January to July 2004: 35 cases in seven months

Social Stress Leads to Overstretched Judicial System

This high incidence of domestic violence has a flow-on effect in our court system, which is already overstretched. With around 6000 cases still incomplete in the High Court alone – going back to 1995, we do not need additional burden. The Police Force also requires some respite but nevertheless they have adopted a ‘no drop policy’ with domestic violence reports – as is the custom overseas. We need to closely ‘examine our navels’ as a society in Fiji at this time and consider where we are headed.

Our domestic violence situation reflects the moral decay, selfishness and stress in which we are bogged down.

Can we find the will and the determination to make things better for our families and for our future?

Compulsory Civics Curriculum in Fiji Schools

I believe that one possible solution to our present predicament could be the introduction of a compulsory civics curriculum in all Fiji schools. It should commence in primary schools and continue through secondary schools. Both the French and American school systems would offer a pattern for such an educational initiative, I believe. I myself studied 'Civics' in the United Kingdom post-secondary school as part of my preparation to enter the workforce. I studied the English Parliamentary System in considerable detail, the history of its evolution, how law is made and debated by Parliament, the judicial system and how it has evolved and why it must be kept free from the taint of executive influence at all times; how the three branches of government should be held accountable and why this is so important for a democracy; why the 'fourth estate' – the Media – is thus termed and its vital role in keeping government honest and accountable. In primary schools, a simple flag ceremony in which all students participate, might instil a sense of loyalty and fidelity to the 'State'. It should be devoid of a particular religious 'spin' but an acknowledgement of 'The Creator', the one God whom we all worship might be made. There would be tensions possibly here with the concept of a Christian state. But that is for others to fathom.

The overriding idea is that we need to learn a concept of Citizenship which applies to all: to both genders, to all ethnic communities and which emphasises our essential partnership in nation-building. Many other useful concepts might be included such as the Vision Fiji Values Programme which I understand is already available in some schools. It would be essential that all schools and all Students are 'on the same page' in this Curriculum. It would be a non-examinable subject. France and the USA are cited here because they are both republics with strong histories of citizenship acquired by people from many ethnicities.

Fiji needs a strong sense of what it means 'to belong' to bind us all together. This 'belonging' brings with it responsibilities and duties just as the state has responsibilities towards all its citizens. This is a 'bond of citizenship', if you like and is a two-way affair.

One would hope that in the medium to longer term such a curriculum for all pupils in Fiji's schools would lessen the 'strain of civilisation' we are

currently undergoing and help all citizens to feel a strong sense of self-worth. No one would be excluded or 'off the page'. It may sound over-idealistic but we surely have nothing to lose here?

The stain of domestic violence and the violence of suicide lie over the land. We owe it to ourselves to investigate every avenue of escape.

Prue Rouse is a businesswoman and a prominent social activist in Fiji. She is also an active member and the Chairperson of Crime Stoppers in Western Fiji.

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace - A Worker's Perspective

Daniel Urai

Sexual harassment is an issue that has been around for some time. It has been given little importance in law. Forty five percent of the global workplace consists of women. In Fiji females comprised 34% of the workforce in 2000; most work in the informal and vulnerable sector with little security of employment let alone protection from sexual harassment.

The law itself is inadequate in protecting women at the workplace. There is no existing law against sexual harassment. The closest one can take action against sexual harassment is under a criminal offence or the Human Rights Commission Act 1999. The inclusion of sexual harassment in the yet to be enacted Industrial Relations Bill itself may not be enough.

However should the Industrial Relations Bill become law, workers would have an avenue to take their grievances to the arbitration tribunal.

Apart from the inadequacy of law, employer's organizations have been ignoring this crucial issue. This only worsens workers plight against sexual harassment. As the economic and political situation deteriorates and unemployment and poverty rise, more women are being exploited and intimidated. Less women come forward with sexual harassment claims for fear of being further humiliated or losing their jobs.

The Fiji Trades Union Congress has been aware of sexual harassment at the workplace, and is extremely concerned with it. In its initiative to create awareness and protect workers, it held a two-day workshop on sexual harassment. This workshop was to enable union leaders to have awareness on the issue of sexual harassment and take remedial action. Some recom-

recommendations were reached during this workshop. These were:

- ? A formal policy on sexual harassment should be drawn up.
- ? Enabling all employees to exercise their right to dignity and respect.
- ? Clearly state that sexual harassment is an unacceptable behavior.
- ? Sexual harassment to be treated as a disciplinary offence.
- ? Assure employees that complaints will be dealt with in a serious manner and under strict confidentiality.
- ? Dissemination of information on sexual harassment.
- ? Unions to negotiate the inclusion of sexual harassment policy in their Collective Agreements.
- ? Making it the duty of the supervisors to implement the sexual harassment policy, and to bring it to the attention of the employees.

It was hoped that this seminar would provide opportunities to members to develop deeper understanding on the issue of sexual harassment and active roles trade unions could play rather than just wait for the government to pass a law on it since Fiji has no sexual harassment law.

FTUC saw an urgent need to raise the awareness on this issue and aimed not only at making the workers aware of sexual harassment related issues but also to come up with measures and publicity materials to make other workers aware of this issue. The workshop resulted in creation of two posters and the formulation of the FTUC sexual harassment policy to be incorporated by all affiliates in their collective agreements.

The policy is a step towards trying to address the problem, which most women workers suffer quietly. We believe that more awareness and resources should be put in place to address this issue. Workers' organization should have a sexual harassment policy rather than waiting for the law to be put in place. This needs support from employers organizations.

Sexual harassment at workplace is a concern for everyone as it affects the morale of the workers and affects the productivity of the organization. Studies have shown that sexual harassment in workplaces creates an unworkable environment whereby the individual being harassed is under a lot of stress, frequently absents herself from work, and develops low self-esteem. These contribute to the low productivity of the organization.

All employers have a duty towards their employees to provide a safe and healthy work environment. It is also an OHS issue which should be addressed by the employers. Employers need to understand the importance of providing a harassment free workplace in return for a high productivity and motivated human capital in the organization.

Due to the lack of legislative mechanisms in Fiji and lack of awareness and accessibility on the issue of sexual harassment, only few women

come out to complain about such incidences. Our social and economic situations contribute highly to the many unreported cases.

Complaints have been received by the FTUC from the banking and aviation sector for its intervention to resolve sexual harassment cases. The Fiji Trades Union Congress in its policy has clearly outlined mechanisms of support and procedures for complaints. We hope that the workers of Fiji can seek assistance from our organization in this regard.

Daniel Urai is the President of the Fiji Trades Union Congress. He is also a sitting Member of Parliament.

Political Violence

Gunasegran Goundar

Political Violence is a term for which a universal definition is extremely difficult and remains elusive. The concept of political violence has been defined in various ways. It could range from physical violence, to intimidation to foul-mouthing. It could also be a general denial of rights for individuals.

Political violence:

- ? is anti-system in character
- ? has some political significance
- ? involves collective or 'mass' activity which includes but is not limited to cases of riots, armed insurgency assassinations etc.

Prevalence

Basically no country in the world is immune to political violence in some form or the other. It is very widespread indeed with its profound negative effects like state instability, polarised population and destruction of lives. The phenomena of political violence is a major cause for concern in the modern world with no real solution in sight. This continues as a scourge and it appears it will remain with us in the future.

Reasons for its existence are many and varied. Autocratic/totalitarian systems of government, ethnic and cultural divisions, poverty, ignorance, lack of development etc., are some of the factors which aid this phenomena.

True democracies are least likely to be victims of political violence. There is in fact an inverse relationship between democracy and violence. Democratic freedom promotes non-violence. The less democratic a government, the more likely it will kill its own citizens in cold blood. Mass killings, massacres and genocide have taken millions of lives. History is full of these incidents. Political violence is escalating globally.

Mahatma Gandhi had once stated: 'I object to violence because, when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary, the evil it does is permanent'. Dr Martin Luther King Jr., stated:

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that'.

Local scenario

Our young nation has seen three coups, two in 1987 and one in 2000. It seems that in Fiji if you can not achieve power through the ballot; you can get it through the bullet. The latter is followed by the 'justification process' to convert an illegitimate act to a legitimate one.

The unfounded and perceived fears of ignorant people are exploited by unscrupulous politicians and leaders to suit their own narrow, short-term interests rather than the long-term and broader interest of the nation.

The constitution is also usually blamed for failures instead of the failure of governments to deliver. There is no perfect constitution in the world -- you have to make it work.

The 1987 coup was carried out on a pretext of avoiding bloodshed, especially 'Fijians shooting Fijians'. The coup-maker later said that he had 'no other way'. This coup was described as a bloodless coup. Could you believe that? I can't.

What followed were atrocious acts of violence and violation of basic human rights. The regime was ruling with the help of decrees. Freedom of movement, speech, religion, assembly, etc., were suppressed. The regime found it easy to use repression as a way of containing the inflammatory situation. Repression was easy because of the ethnic or racial divisions that exist in our society. The army and police were freely used by the regime in its repressive acts to curtail freedom.

Year 2000 saw another violent overthrow of an elected government by terrorists emboldened by the events and results of the 1987 coup. What followed is well-known. The Government of the day with the Prime Minister, ministers and members were incarcerated for 56 days in the Parliament complex. I also happened to be taken hostage. The violence - physical, psychological and emotional - that was unleashed on the Members of Parliament is well-known to me via first hand experience as well as a witness-cum-medical attendant. Lesser persons would have left the field and taken haven elsewhere.

The Parliament House is supposed to be sacrosanct. It is the apex institution in a democracy. The actions that took place there were highly sacrilegious. The complex was turned into a warehouse, cemetery and a den for criminals. The whole place was plundered and pillaged.

Then the nation also witnessed the unceremonious and violent removal of the President of the nation. The holder of that high office was none other than the late Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, who had sacrificed and dedicated his whole life to the service of the nation. He is accepted as the father of the nation.

Then we have the people of Muaniweni and surrounding areas who were subjected to all sorts of terrorist acts by criminals and terrorists. They had to flee their homes and hide in bushes. Their assets were robbed and houses razed to the ground. Most of them ended up as refugees in the western division.

Suva City also experienced the first ever attack by criminals as a fallout of the political events. The losses were unprecedented and cannot be quantified easily.

Attacks on rural and remote area residents continued for some months. It spread to Vanua Levu as well. Ironically, little police and army protection was provided to these victims until about late August.

After the release of the hostages the army went on rounding up the terrorists and restoring law and order as the nation was in shambles with destruction and mayhem.

Mutiny

2nd November 2000 was the first time in the history of Fiji Military Force that it experienced a mutiny. Fortunately for the nation it was unsuccessful. The most unfortunate thing though was that lives were lost on both sides.

In all 19 lives were lost in the year 2000 crisis.

Legislative

Unfortunately hate speeches continue in our Parliament. Only last week we all heard and read about hate speeches, intimidating attacks on individuals and groups by many senators. Some of them are nominees of the Prime Minister. Unfortunately, there are no signs of the Prime Minister censuring them. Does he condone such divisive and non-conciliatory remarks from his own senators, especially when his Government professes to promote reconciliation?

Churches

Bible bashing is another negative feature in our society. This holy book is being misused to highlight the divisions in society by some groups instead of using the Biblical teachings to unite the people. In fact some groups openly supported the coup of 1987.

In a multicultural/multi-religious society we must respect other religions as we respect our own. Mere tolerance, therefore, is not enough.

Conclusion

The book being launched today is about violence in the *Girmit* era more than a century ago. The descendents of *girmityas* are subject to violence, intimidation, and denial even today; only the circumstances and players have changed in time. It is violence all the same.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, the solution to Political Violence lies in achieving genuine democracy with the protection of individual rights and freedom.

It can only be countered by non-violence because violence begets violence. The only way to peace is peace itself, according to Gandhi.

In any conflict situation there is some truth on both sides. This fact has to be realised in conflict resolution.

Gandhi said: 'Three quarters of all disagreement and misunderstanding would disappear from the world, were we able to put ourselves in the shoes of our opponents and understand their views. Either we would come to an agreement with them or we would think charitably of them.' So true he was.

Gunasegran Goundar is a medical practitioner, and a sitting Member of Parliament. He was a hostage for 56 days when terrorists took the elected government hostage in May 2000. At the time Dr. Gunasegran was the Assistant Minister for Health.