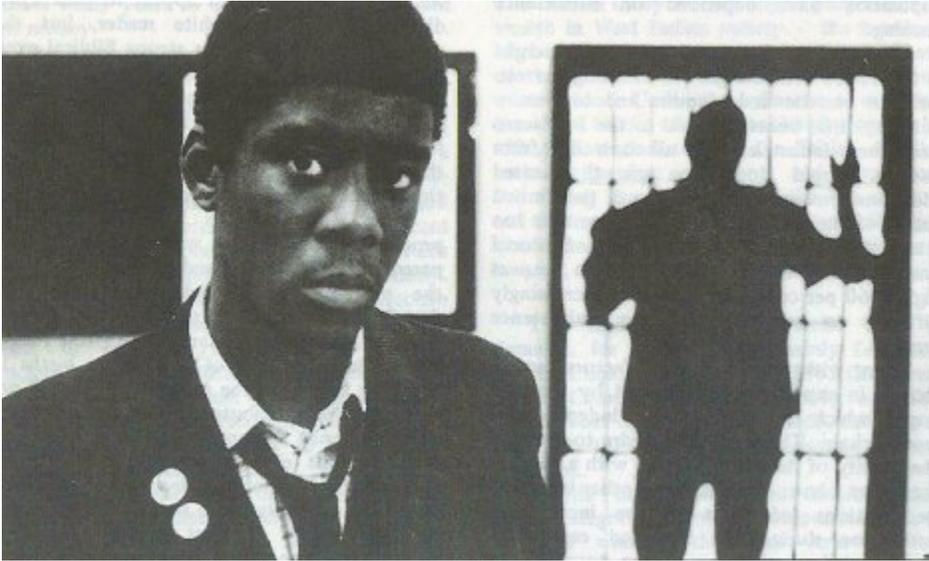


Talking Blues - the black community speaks about its relationship with the police



Introduction

OUR aim in publishing this collection of interviews is to attempt to communicate to a wider audience the experiences, frustrations and sense of bitter injustice of young black people concerning police behaviour.

We are, of course, aware that complaints about police behaviour are not confined to young black people, but the extent and depth of the feeling of injustice expressed in these interviews is a reflection of a problem of quite different proportions than any normal distrust of the police amongst the young.

Our aim is not to 'knock' the police. The interviews reproduced in this study make clear that the cause of this frustration goes beyond police behaviour to lack of jobs, inadequacies in the education system and, most deeply, to a feeling that this society is incapable of accepting young black people as full citizens. Those who are in touch with them will know how truly representative are the attitudes and opinions expressed. Our hope is that those who do not know will open their minds to the message contained in the interviews.

The message is quite simply that our society is failing savagely to respect its young black citizens and that something must be done and done urgently to improve the situation.

Action is needed in the schools and to provide jobs and housing, but the flashpoint is the relationship between the police and black youth. It would be quite wrong, after reading these

interviews, to blame the police for all that is wrong. But it would be very foolish indeed not to accept that there is an urgent need for improvement in police attitudes and behaviour.

The interviews were collected in the Birmingham area. Since we began work on this report, statistics have become available concerning the extent of crime in Handsworth (one of the major areas of West Indian settlement in Birmingham). We know that the police sub-division which includes Handsworth has one of the lowest levels of recorded crime in the West Midlands - tenth out of twelve police sub-divisions - and is the only area with a fall in recorded crime in 1977.

We also know that police in Handsworth estimate that less than two per cent of the West Indian population are involved in crimes against people and property*. Yet almost all young West Indians live with a constant fear of being stopped and questioned by the police and have little expectation of just treatment; and most West Indian parents fear that their children, whenever they go out in the evening, may find themselves in conflict with the police.

When one talks to senior police officers about this question, they make the point that the police can be no better than the society from which they are drawn. They argue that because racist attitudes are widespread in our society, it follows that they will be reflected in the police force. This is of course true and many of the kids who were interviewed made the point that the police are no more than representatives of a racist society. Nevertheless the matter cannot rest there. Powers of leadership, education and discipline must be brought into play to improve quickly and radically the attitudes of the police to young black people.

I should make it clear that we are in no sense suggesting that the police of Birmingham or Handsworth are in any way unusual. Our survey was conducted in Birmingham because that is where we are based but the problem is the same in Brixton, Chapelton and the rest of the country. Nor do we claim that each of the allegations made are true in every particular - we cannot know that. We hope that readers of the report will look to the overall message rather than seek to quarrel over particular details.

We cannot, of course, claim that the sample contained in this report is scientifically based. We set out to collect on tape, the views of a cross-section of young black people. A random sample, filling out a questionnaire could not have achieved this end. There are parts of human experience that cannot be communicated by scientific sampling. Nor did we have the resources for a massive survey.

We obtained a small grant to produce the report and employed, on a part-time basis, a West Indian bus driver to collect most of the interviews. He went out with his tape-recorder to coffee bars and youth clubs and asked young West Indians to speak of their experiences. He did not prompt the interviewees in any way. He explained that we were conducting a survey on the attitudes of young blacks to the police and asked them to speak in their own words of their experiences. He told them that he would not interrupt and then handed over the tape-recorder to the individual concerned.

The material collected was then painstakingly transcribed and finally edited. The editing sought to be as true to the original material as it was possible to be. We cut out repetitive paragraphs and

some very long stories, in the belief that we could not otherwise hold the attention of our readers. We have not selected the material that we reproduce in order to fit any ideas of our own. We attempted to keep the sample balanced by going out of our way to interview some successful and highly qualified young people so that there was no possibility that the views expressed represented only the outlook of the unemployed and alienated. We were ourselves surprised to find how universal the feeling of rejection was.

We also decided to include some interviews with priests and parents. The interviews with Church Ministers involved in youth work with young West Indians would, we thought, be of interest because they came from an almost unimpeachable source. They are not as forceful, eloquent and impatient as the words of the young blacks themselves but they do support the thesis that something is deeply wrong.

The interviews with parents are limited in that number and therefore more easily open to the accusation that they are not representative. We nevertheless thought some should be included. The interviews with the parents from the Tenasicod Order of the Morning Star represent the sector of black parental opinion that tends to blame the young people themselves for their troubles.

I cannot end this short preface without some words of thanks to all who have been involved in this project. The report may not be voluminous but it has involved a lot of very painstaking work. It would have been much easier to employ an individual to produce a subjective report but our whole aim was to let the people involved speak for themselves. Special thanks are due to Carlton Green who collected most of the interviews, Marcia Stewart who did most of the transcribing, helped by Cina Corcoran, and Derek Bishton and Brian Homer who took on the onerous task of editing and ordering the material.

I'd like to end by quoting the words of Lambuston:

"... We would like to show you the way we feel, how the black man feel from the black man point of view... and I hope say that this show dem say we can't take much more 'cause is too much really. I hope after they read this report they do something fi try to improve the relationship between black and white, especially between black youths and police before any war and things. We can't stand this oppression any more, we can't stand this pressure..."

CLARE SHORT
March 1978

* *Shades of Grey* - John Brown (Cranfield Institute of Technology).

Background

Consideration of West Indian culture and opinion cannot be given without an appreciation of what happened in the past to the African peoples who were forced to become West Indians. The long years of slavery, colonialism and poverty cannot be dismissed by saying that everything is different now; they have a direct bearing on West Indian life today. Here a black social worker who was brought up and works in Handsworth gives his views on how these factors have influenced West Indian culture.

DURING THE period of British colonisation the economies of the West Indian islands were, like colonies in other parts of the world, geared to the needs of the British economy. Up until 1834 the Jamaican economy, for example, was dominated by the sugar plantation. This system of monoculture has continued since emancipation, and consequently the island has suffered from the changing patterns of world trade. Employment on the land has always been a precarious business, and the vast majority of the population have depended on subsistence farming.

The modern Jamaican economy emerged in the 1950s with the growth of foreign investment in bauxite and alumina and tourism - but very little benefit accrued to the Jamaicans since these industries were all controlled from outside. Rapid population growth created additional pressures and because of the limited nature of the colonial economy there were too many people chasing too few jobs. Seasonal unemployment on the land has often been as high as 60 per cent, and it became increasingly difficult to survive solely by subsistence farming.

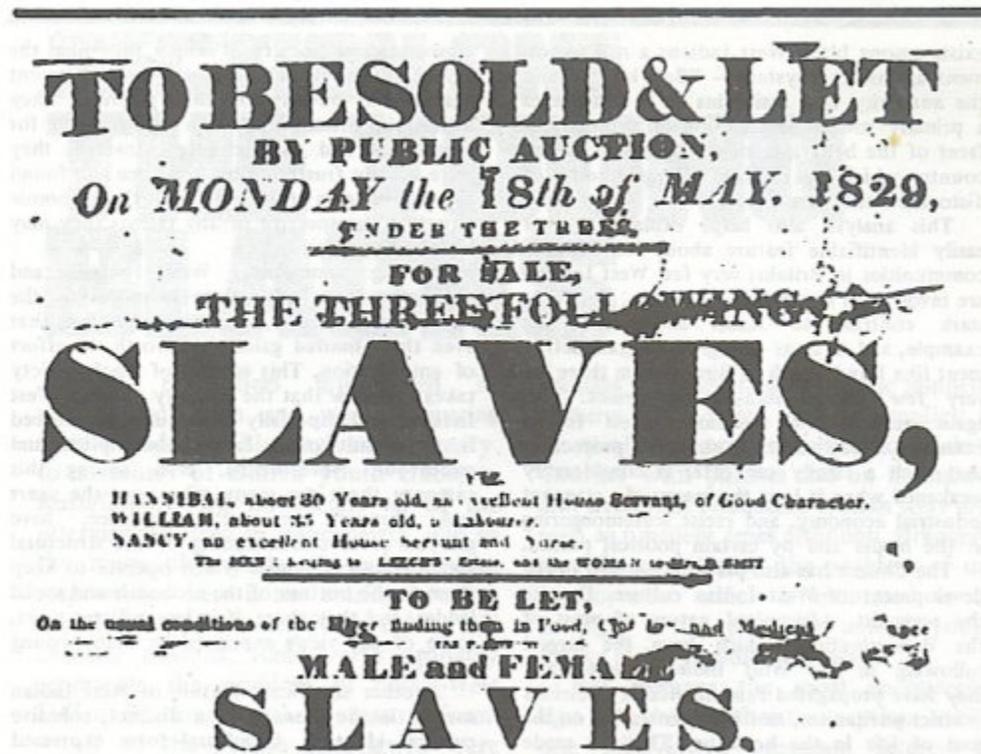
Along with these economic factors came a growth in expectations, enhanced by the high hopes which accompanied independence from Britain. The inevitable desire to improve the quality of their life, coupled with a demand for cheap labour in Britain and other industrialised nations led to a massive increase in emigration during the 50s and early 60s.

Colonialism, slavery and the poverty that accompanied it also created the framework for the social patterns and family life of the West Indies. For example, emancipation far from freeing the slaves, merely condemned them to further poverty since planters refused to sell negroes land, and most of it either remained in white hands or passed to the rural population of mixed or coloured origin.

Slavery stripped Africans of their language, culture, and sense of identity and attempted to re-indoctrinate them with the culture of the mother country; its Christian religion; and a sense of inferiority. The process did not totally exterminate the slaves' sense of origin, as the Africanised form of West Indian churches shows. It shows also in West Indian patois which is clearly a different language to English, both in its content and logic. It is for this reason that many young blacks of West Indian origin but born in Britain, have adopted it so enthusiastically.

This is illustrated by the statements that follow. Most of the young people used patois almost throughout their statements, in contrast to the parents. The reasons for this are clearly linked with the desire expressed by many of the young people to feel that they have a distinctive identity, since it would appear from their background that a number of young people consciously chose to

speaking in this way. At first sight this might appear to pose some difficulties for the white reader, but the sentence construction has strong Biblical overtones and will repay close study. It will certainly help dispel some of the complaints articulated by the young that white authority thinks of them as ignorant and inferior because they express their distinctive culture in a form that appears slightly alien to white ears.



Less than 150 years ago, a detail from an 1829 poster for a slave auction.

Many commentators have identified the process by which slaves were stripped of their parental responsibility and authority as being the prime cause for what has since been described as a dominant and persistent pattern - the 'foot loose and fancy free' West Indian male. The high rate of illegitimate births in the West Indies (in the early 60s it was 70 per cent) has been attributed to this. Such research as exists tends to support the view that West Indian unions (even though they may take the form of cohabitation which may last for many years) are probably more stable than marriages between people of West Indian descent in Britain. In the West Indies the marriage ceremony is often delayed because much status is attributed to a conspicuous display, and because of the problems of poverty, it often takes many years to save the required amount of money.

Poverty is probably the single most important factor in the formation and maintenance of an extended, and often matriarchal, family system such as is found in the West Indies. With unemployment such a pressing problem, and in the absence of state assistance, individuals tend to look toward their family for mutual support. A significant feature of this process is a strong emphasis on respect and responsibility for the elderly. This is characterised by a rather directive approach to child-rearing. Clearly, when this kind of structure is transported into a society with

vastly different pressures it leads to great tension between the young who may be attracted to new freedoms and standards, and the old, who often try to preserve the traditional family structure.

Running parallel with the pattern already described (and sometimes in conflict with it) are rigidly defined class and status categories. Traditionally, West Indian society tends to be very class conscious. In the past, class and status were closely associated with colour. The owners of by far the largest proportion of wealth in West Indian society — the members of the highest status groups - were descendants of slave owners and were either white or of mixed blood. Under the influence of colonialism those blacks who had achieved a degree of affluence tended to ape the British colonial prejudice against merchants and commerce. So, during the latter part of the last century and during this one, educated and middle class blacks tended to become teachers, doctors, lawyers, churchmen or civil servants.

The trading and commercial elite in Jamaica, for example, was mainly Lebanese, Syrian, Cuban and Chinese. In 1963 there were 70,000 Chinese in Jamaica, and they controlled 90 per cent of the provision trade, and 95 per cent of the supermarkets, restaurants and laundries.

Despite the emphasis on decolonialising status categories following independence, it is doubtful whether this class structure has changed fundamentally. Consequently, there exists among black West Indians a real resentment against this system - "Babylon" - and the authority that maintains it. It constitutes a primary source of rejection of authority, a facet of the behaviour of young blacks in this country which has received a large amount of distorted media coverage.

This analysis also helps explain another easily identifiable feature about West Indian communities in Britain; very few West Indians are involved in commerce or trading. This is in stark contrast to Asian immigrants, for example, and in areas of high immigrant settlement like Handsworth in Birmingham there are very few West-Indian-run businesses. This again weakens the traditional West Indian extended family structure since the protection that such a family can offer is considerably weakened when it is at the mercy of a stagnant industrial economy, and racist scaremongering in the media and by certain political parties.

The Church has also played a big part in the development of West Indian culture. Despite the revivalist, Africanised nature of most of the denominations which have the largest following in the West Indies, traditionally they have propagated fundamentalist doctrines - strict puritanism, and a concentration on the goal of life in the hereafter. This has made them firm supporters of authority and the existing establishment. Members of these churches, and it is estimated that 25 per cent of the West Indian population in Birmingham attend such churches regularly, apply these doctrines rigidly not only to themselves, but to all members of their family. In practice, these doctrines mean total abstinence from alcohol, and social functions such as dances, and they often prohibit the wearing of jewellery and fashionable clothes, and more especially, premarital relations between the sexes.

These churches tend to be the only community organisations which are open to the masses of black West Indians, and the conflicts that erupt when a youngster has come into contact with the altogether freer nature of British mainstream society can lead to extremes of behaviour. The

resentment that is provoked in this can lead to a total abandonment of moral values by young blacks, and create the fuel for a real crisis of identity.

From this brief and necessarily simplified outline, it is possible to identify a number of features concerning West Indian society which may facilitate an understanding of some of the views expressed in the statements which follow.

First, most black West Indians came from a class-conscious society in which they held the lowest position, and they harbour resentment against the poverty of that position. They arrived in Britain with high expectations for themselves and their children. Instead, they were usually frustrated by prejudice and found themselves again at the bottom of the economic structure, irrespective of any talents they may have had to offer.

Among some older West Indians, and especially those who were members of the fundamentalist sects, there was the view that even these limited gains were worth the effort of emigration. This section of black society takes the view that the inability of other West Indians, and especially the young, to succeed is the result of a lack of discipline and endeavour. Nevertheless, even among this category there are many who over the years and through personal experience have grasped some understanding of the structural and ideological fences which operate to keep them at the bottom of the economic and social ladder, and they share, if in less militant ways, some of the views expressed by many young blacks.

Another significant feature of West Indian society is the absence of a distinct, cohesive cultural identity. A cultural form expressed through the extended family system may include a variety of different types of relationship, depending on the wealth, class, colour, and commitment or non-commitment to a particular religious sect of that family. Hence, relationships between West Indian families may vary from anti-authoritarian but supportive to very authoritarian and oppressive.

It is against this background of lack of identity that Rastafarianism has grown. Whilst it had its roots in the black nationalist movements of the late 1920s, in recent years the inability of successive Governments to wield West Indian society into cohesive social units and to meet burning economic need has provided additional fuel. Similarly, for young West Indians, most of whom were born in Britain, their inability to find a place in British society means that Rastafarianism offers perhaps the only identity available to them - especially since they do not share the same commitment to the extended family as their parents, and often find it oppressive.

The dress which characterises this movement produces a conspicuous appearance which emphasises their separateness, and which is met with resentment from many quarters of British society, and most obviously, the police force.

Section One - The Young Blacks

AFFOR researchers interviewed 34 young black men and women, ranging from a student at Birmingham University, to members of church youth clubs, to Rastafarians. By no means all of the interviewees lived in Handsworth, and so the range of experiences and opinions represented here is not confined to one specific area of the city, although as will become obvious, Handsworth probably represents the problem of police-West Indian relations in its most acute form.

All of the people interviewed were asked to give their views on the relationship between black youths and the police. More than one third of the people spoken to recounted at least one incident of police harassment or brutality which they had experienced themselves, and nearly every other interviewee told of an incident relating to a close friend. It is significant that half of those interviewed saw the problem in a fairly wide social context and blamed racist tendencies in society as a whole as being responsible for focusing police attention on blacks. Many specifically accused the police of acting and speaking in a manner which indicated that they thought black people were inferior.

Those who offered a solution generally thought that it lay in a wider understanding of, and sympathy for, West Indian culture, and six of those interviewed made the specific recommendation that police officers should receive special training in understanding ethnic minority cultures. This point was also implicit in many of the more generalised complaints. Conflict with parents and an insensitive and irrelevant education system were also seen as problem areas although, strangely, very few mentioned the problem of unemployment which is estimated to be as high as 25 per cent among young blacks in the Handsworth area.

But perhaps the most encouraging sign was that, without exception, everyone interviewed expressed interest in finding a solution and improving the present situation. Whatever proposals are put forward by the Government - in terms of economic revitalisation, by the local authorities - in terms of housing and social provisions, and by the police - in terms of revising their methods, they can all be sure that they will be received in a positive spirit by the young blacks.

Bad Deal in Babylon

Cynthia was born in England. She left school with four 'O' levels and seven CSE certificates. She is at present studying at a Technical College in Birmingham for 'A' levels. She describes two incidents.

ONE NIGHT my boyfriend was going home from my house and it so happened that it was his birthday and I bought him an expensive razor and he had several other presents. After getting the mid-night service, he was walking home on the road that he lives on. A police car drew up and they stopped him and they wanted to know where he was going. He told them he was going home. They wanted to know what he had in his hands and what he was doing on the streets so late, so he told them he was going home and the presents he had in his hands were presents from his girlfriend. But they couldn't have believed him 'cause they kept on asking him where he got it from. Eventually they took him down to the police station and he was there for three hours before

they 'phoned me up and asked me had he been at my house that night and did he have anything with him when he left and I told them that I bought him a shaver.

Anyway, the next morning I saw him and the whole of his face was full with bruises and he got marks all over his body, apparently they beat him up because they didn't believe that the razor was a birthday present, they kept insisting that maybe he stole it. When he kept saying no it was a birthday present they kept hitting him. It is things like this that brings the conclusion that the police are racist. I pass people when they are being stopped by the police, I mean, I have been in a car myself and the police just stop us for no reason and they want to know all kinds of irrelevant information, like who are the rest of people in the car beside the driver and where are we going.

As far as I can see the more down and out a black man is, or the black youth is, the more advantages the police will take of you, if you happen to look dirty or scruffy, or walking around mid-day when you should be working the more the police harass you. I don't think they like to see black people better themselves and if they see a young youth with a car they will find excuses to stop him three and four times in one day on the pretext of just routine spot checks.

I feel the police have to have certain amount of bias of racism in them. I mean, for instance, I went to Rebecca's one night to see Delroy Wilson and it must have been full inside according to the management, and there was quite a few people standing around outside. Anyway the police drew up. A sizeable amount of them turned up, and not only did they turn up by themselves, they brought guard dogs, paints and batons and they were really man-handling the crowd. I mean it was a peaceful crowd just waiting to get in, and the police didn't even ask the crowd to just move on or go home, they just set the dogs loose, if anybody back answered the police or tried to question the situation they found that they would be bitten by a dog or they would get hit with the baton.

We couldn't help ourselves or we couldn't stand up for ourselves or the whole of them would just gang in on us. I feel they must have been prepared for trouble 'cause they brought white paint with them. In fact, they splashed the paint all over the people and this must have been to mark those who were there. I mean they must have obviously been out for trouble. It is this kind of behaviour that results in confrontation with the police. If the police are going to be continually harassing people, black people, then there is going to come a stage where they are not going to accept it. They are going to stand up for themselves, they are going to fight back. It is reaching a situation where young people are always on their guard and they are always aware of the police. I feel that the police don't understand black people. They can't understand that we want to be free, we want to be left alone.

Paul came to Britain in 1968 when he was 15. Immediately after leaving school in 1969 he got a job and was in full-time employment until November 1976 when he was made redundant. Since then he has found it impossible to obtain work, despite three years' experience as a van driver. This one example of contact with the police typifies many of the responses of young blacks we encountered.

THIS story wey happen to me the first of March with some of the Babylon man dem. On the first of March me and a sister a walk come down Churchill Road. Me and her a walk down nice and easy, talk and thing, little after we see about four police car a rush a come down the road, so the sister

say to I: "Some big trouble must be down the road dey, you know". So I say: "I suppose so". We a walk along down the road nice and easy. When we reach the end of Churchill Road we look down and see a whole heap of crowd down Westminster Road. So the sister say me and her can walk go down dey. So me say, all right. So me walk as far as Hutton Road, and then little after me see whole heap of police car down dey.

The Babylon man dem and a whole heap of the Natty Dread dem down dey, you see. So me see two sister wey I know, so I just want to find out what happen. Dem a try explain to I, but at the time the sister dem wasn't on the scene to see that was carrying on from the first place. But as far as dem tell me two police man and some dread have some trouble down dey. So we dey a talk, and thing like that, till after we see a police car come from the bottom of Westminster Road. Then after it turn 'pon Hutton Road and when it turn 'pon Hutton Road, it turn round and come back up. So me see four Dread stand a corner a Hutton Road and Westminster Road, and then little after the police turn round and come back up. Dem stop right in front of dem and I see the driver come from outside the car. Then one come from the other side and then them come over to the guys them and said me never catch the words dem wa dem say but dem did a talk to dem. Me hear one a dem say dem a come from Newtown.

So we stand up and watch dem out a the way. I stand up by myself and lean up 'pon a gate post. Little after me see the police start grab the guys dem, and three police man grab a little daughter and throw her into the car, not even put, throw her in the car, you see. And little after dem put another guy in the car, another Dread, so dem take dem and drive off with dem and me stand up across the road.

Little after the car pass me. And when it pass me it stop suddenly and reverse and come back. One of the Babylon him point 'pon me and say there's another one of dem by himself. Fi time he say the words about four of dem rush from round the corner, for a van did park round the corner. Some in a plain clothes and some in a uniform, and by one of dem fi say the word about four of dem rush come in of me and gang me round, and one a them grab me. Me ask dem what dem grab me for, for me never do nothing, you see, for me just stand up by myself. You just can't walk and pick up black people like dat fi just do nothing at all. Innocent people like dat, you see, so me say to him. And him grab me and carry me to the van. Me just try struggle away from dem but me say when me think back, me say, why should I struggle from dem? And me no do nothing. Is 'bout four of dem take me and me in a the van and carry rne a Thornhill Road.

So then them take me to Thornhill Road with the other rest of guys and girls and put we in a different room. One of the police man claim say I come behind him and hold him and then two of my friend beat him up you see. And I never even see what happen. He only hear what a happen, you see, but at the time dem charge me with assaulting a police man. In this country ya dem claim say dem have law. But I don't know what dem call so. For this law ya is just as bad as de one dem out ya, you see, and that's all.

Our interview with Winston illustrated another depressingly familiar scenario. Winston, who is 25, worked as an assembler at a car plant until he was made redundant, and when we spoke to him had spent six months trying unsuccessfully to get a job. Desperate for money, he decided to sell off some of the possessions he had bought in better times. He was arrested by police in a second-hand shop in Handsworth on suspicion of trying to sell a stolen cassette player.

AFTER dem take I in a the station, now dem come inside a my room and just start search it, you know, and because dem find a colour television dem just take it way. Dem don't have any reason fi take it 'cause nobody never report it stolen and dem just take it way and hold on 'pon it and still I man can't get it back now. Well now, neither the cassette or the television was stolen, you know. I feel this a perfect example of police harassment. You know what I mean? Because I sure say if you is a white man a walk down the street with this thing here dem wouldn't really stop him; but from you is a black man you expect them things dey fi happen.

I see this form of treatment as being wrong because the way I see it the law suppose to protect everybody; and the way I see whole heap a black man a get treat now is direct harassment. If a righteous man fi see it, it can only be classified as brutality, in that the freedom wa a white man have really is like favouritism towards them 'cause they can walk on the street without any fear of brutality and yet as soon as the black man step out him have to look out fi that kind of treatment dey.

Now the way I see the relationship between police and black people in this country is rock-bottom, because dem don't really try and understand the culture, belief of black people; dem try bring up black people the way dem feel black people should come up. For instance, take all a Rasta man now; me sure the way dem did see it is, like say well, Rasta is gangster; is like say, a rebellious thing, but now I feel say dem a realise say Rastafari is a religious thing and I feel in that sense a kind of understanding grow now. Still, it kind a late fl really start understand because dem do the damage already, but still, the way I man see it, better late than never; 'cause progress is never too far gone.

I only hope that this interview I just give can help and bring some form of understanding between the police and black people because without understanding we can't really make progress and man dey and have fi make progress. Now if the police carry on oppressing black people without really trying to understand we na go really get no wey with that; and I feel if it keep up like how I man see that it a go keep up, it a go even all spread to the black people dem, the older people them. I mean we can't really get no where until we form some kind of understanding.

Culture Clash

The belief that white society looked down on the blacks as inferior and made no attempt to understand their distinctive culture was widespread, and seen by many of those we interviewed as one of the main causes of the trouble.

Angela, for example, a 19-year-old born in Jamaica but educated in England, believed that part of the responsibility lay with the black population who had to educate the police into understanding more about the people they were dealing with. Angela has seven 'O' levels, two 'A' levels but is working as a waitress in a city-centre restaurant until she can find the sort of job opportunity she really wants. She described an incident outside the Odeon Cinema in New Street, Birmingham. She and some friends were standing around outside when they were asked to move along by police. They pointed out that some while girls were also standing outside but they had not been asked to move. A row developed and eventually two of Angela's friends were arrested.

I DIDNT get in trouble as I said, but my friends had records that were read in court and as I see it they didn't do anything to provoke the police in the first place, they were just minding their own business. Because they are black they had to pick on them but the white people can stand there - that's not fair. It's not fair that one can do that. As I said my friends (I am not mentioning their names), one has got better qualifications than I have, one of them is a nurse and the other one is training to be a teacher, so you can see that we are not from bad backgrounds. We have been trying to bring ourselves up to help the black people. But you only have to be black to get in trouble and things like that.

I think that we ought to help the police to help us because they don't know anything about us and we don't know nothing about them, only that we go around in gangs and things, and we are very lively to them but I can't see that we are any livelier than any white people. We are just lively and try to make the best of a bad job. Go into Handsworth and see the people that are round there. See just how deprived we are in education and things.

The belief that a lot of trouble is caused because the police react aggressively towards the generally more exuberant behaviour of West Indians arose several times in the interviews. Unice is a 17-year-old vicar's daughter. She works in an insurance office, and gave the following opinion.

THE situation is pretty bad, and I think it will continue to get worse unless something is done now, and positively, not negatively.

The police bring on all the trouble that is caused between black youths and themselves. I mean, black boys are no different from white boys, and yet white boys get away with practically murder every time, and the black boys only have to be laughing too loud and they get picked up.

Most black boys wouldn't trouble anybody and they won't harm anybody, it's the white people that bring trouble on themselves. Black boys can just be walking down the road, joking and having a laugh generally, and they can be told to get off the streets. After all, England is a free country and I don't think that kind of attitude from the police helps anyway, 'cause it just makes the black boys angry and then they start answering back, and that all leads to fighting, and somebody is going to get hurt. I think the policeman is wrong. They think black people are stupid, and they think that we are still slaves, and they think that it's all right to push people around and treat them like dirt. But I'm glad they're realising now, and they are finding out that black boys aren't going to take it. They are going to stand up for themselves, they are going to defend themselves and they are going to fight back if needs be, and they will kill to do it. I am not saying that I am for Rastafarianism or anything like that. I am not saying that I am against the police, but until they start realising that black youths are somebody, that they are just like anybody else in the world, they have got a place and a right to be here, unless they start realising that there is always going to be this trouble, because black boys aren't going to stand for it. They are not going to be pushed around, they are not going to be kicked in the dirt.



The thing with the police is that they pick you up for one thing, and then when you are in court, they testify against you for something completely different. An example is when my brother was picked up by the police, he was with about four other youths and they were told they were picked up for disturbing the peace, and when they got to court, the policeman that testified against them, said they were using bad language and they were aggressive, meaning they were causing a fight. But none of that even happened 'cause all they were simply doing was laughing.

Underlying these comments about the clash of behavioural patterns is a deeply felt, and in many interviews, fiercely expressed belief that the integrity of West Indian culture should not be swallowed up or diluted by the mother country. There is, too, a profound sense of outrage, as this interview with William shows. William describes an incident where he was arrested and taken away in a police van. While in the van, and without any provocation on his part, several policemen held him with his face pressed against the floor of the vehicle.

WHY all the while dem have to brutalise I man? And I man really have to do something, you see. And I end up that I hit one of them, you know. And the man dem beat I up and all spit 'pon I, tear off all me jumper and charge me. And what Justice dat? I not go charge dem because I no have no evidence, you see. A six a dem and I one, but still dem charge I and dem no have no witness, because dem is the same, the Government and the whole a dem. Dem even show I man say, well, you could have had worse that what you have. When I a look 'pon dem and say well you never have to go on like dat. Him say, "You could have had worse". Him a go charge me same way fi assault him because him get a little bruise 'pon him foot. Where the human dignity? A mean, how can a man assault a police man in a him own police van when him a carry him go a station? What cause him would have?



But no, man, you see, dem have we down you see, dem a brutalise we all the day and dem na give we nothing. But dem don't feel it. Fi dem time will come. We na go take this all the time. All a incident like, when a man go a jail and a man have on him dread (dreadlocks) dem just cut it off.

You see dem no make we live up to no culture, no religion. Dem try fi brainwash we and make we live like dem. So all them thing da now, wa the world do bout dem thing dey? The China man live fi him life. The white live fi him own. Every race, but no, the black people. Black man must live like

dem, just like how dem take we in a slave dem expect to keep we. We have to chant down this, man, the whole a we, we have to come together now, all a we and realise. We really don't have we own mind, man, we don't have we own culture, we don't have nothing fi we self. Every thing is fi them own and dem don't want you to have none, anybody who try to live up to dem roots, dem try dem best fi keep we down man. Anything at all fi keep we down. So what we have fi do bout this now?

The sense of cultural oppression was expressed in various ways. For Brian it was leading to the creation of a police state, with armed confrontation almost inevitable.

I GO a school over here; but what dem use to teach I in school, well though at the time I never see it too clear, but it was nothing to do with I. Dem was dealing with fi dem policy. Dem was telling me about the white man have black people in slavery. Dem use to tell I that Christopher Columbus was a great, great man - and Walter Raleigh and that kind of doctrine dem use to show I in school. After a while I use to get fed up of it 'cause I never really know nothing about black people. The education dem was giving to I was brain-wash education. Education what would suit a white man; 'cause really and truly I know say Christopher Columbus and all dem man dey was wicked, yet dem was showing I say dem man was great people because dem put black people in slavery.

And I broke away from all school, I rejected dem teaching after a while and I start seek knowledge of black people. The knowledge of my culture. I start seek out the roots of black people fi I self, 'cause what dem was showing I was corruption. Dem use to show I say everything black is bad and everything white is good. Things like dem use to say - Snow White was a very good woman - a black lie is badder than a white lie - dem use to tell me say any words being with all black mean bad, like blackmail, things like that. So I used to say - well no, dem is just made by man, dem made by man fi all corrupt the black people mind.

So when I break away I decide, say well, I going to seek out my culture and my roots, for dem never use to show I where I coming from and the oppression that the humiliation what my fore-parents went through. And that was the knowledge that I did want. So I left school.

Really and truly, my parents dem was corrupted too because dem accept the white man way of life. I don't feel say it was because dem did want to accept it, but is 'cause dem never see a way fi fight against it. So I began reading books about Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, great man like those. And I started seeing the light more clearly. So I use to move in a way and do things that a black man should do. I use to act the way a black man should act and people use to see it and dem use to fight against it. In school, certain things what a white man use to do I couldn't do 'cause him was white. And I find that the same problem is going on now.

The other day I was walking on Canterbury Road and I saw my little cousin and him have a five-speed bicycle. And I look and I tell him, well, I did want to borrow him bicycle to go somewhere. So him give me the bicycle. So I got on the bicycle, I was on the sidewalk, and I was riding up pass the police station ready to go on the road. A police walk out, like him never have nothing to do, so him call I, and I being innocent didn't run or anything, I just went to him. And him say: "How come a black man is riding a five-speed bicycle?" And I ask him what him mean by that? And him say: "If a black man ride a no gear bicycle, is nothing, but when you see black people riding five gear and

driving cars, well, something is wrong because we don't like to see that". That is what the policeman say to I.

So same time I say is my brother bicycle. Him say, "No, you steal that bike". And I say: "What you mean I steal that bike? There is me cousin down there, I will go and call him". And same time him grab me in me collar and say, "No you coming in here with me". So I say: "What am I coming in here for?" And him say: "You nick that bicycle". And I say I can prove that I didn't nick it. And him pull me; and a next two come out; and dem draw me in the police station. Dem have me in dey about half hour. Dem start box and thump. Dem start to brutalise me and all I did want find out is the reason why dem was doing it. I know the real reason was not because dem thought I nick the bike but 'cause I was black, and dem don't like to see black people with anything what dem have or anything better than what dem have. We are regarded lower than animals in the eyes of the white man.

So I was brutalised fi about half hour and dem let me out, and when I was walking out I look at one of dem and I say: "I want your number". And him say: "Number! Get out you black cunt". And I say "Ya" and I take him number and him see when I was going out, when I was going out him say: "Come back here". And I said: "No! I going to see a solicitor for I going to report you". And same time him chase after me and him run me down as him was chasing me him take off him helmet and throw and burst my head. But I never stop run, I keep on running, you see, and him burst me head.

And I go and see a solicitor and when I see the solicitor, and enquiries make, nothing came out of it. That's why I say, I don't know what is going on who is there to help black people along the way. 'Cause I have seen many organisations and many organisations have said, well, dem can help black people to break down these barriers and break the oppression and all the humiliation, the brutalisation of the black youths in this country. 'Cause it's getting very bad and I know say well things is going to turn out very drastic if this don't come to an end.

Right now I man make up my mind that if a police approach I again I know say well whether I innocent or not him going to look and say I guilty of doing this or doing that. Dem come with a thing now dem frame people with some little charges. Dem see dem walking in red, gold and green belt and dem catch dem and dem charge dem with all indecent exposure because we have on the colours. *[The police claimed that Rasta colours trailing from the belt and down the front of the trousers was indecent.]* And if dem see you and you shoes lace don't tie, or if dem see you all a run 'pon street dem say disorderly conduct and dem frame you, and dem drop some little charge on you and dem bring it to court and you don't win you see. 'Cause the police, the judge, the magistrate, dem is all one, the whole of dem is crooked and dem all work together. I say the only way black people can do it now is fi all stand up fi dem right and all fight. 'Cause is the only solution I can see right now, 'cause no-one out to show black people any truth and right or nothing.

Another incident what show I say black people have no human rights, this is the way the white men put it. We have no human rights for we are animals. I a go tell you about an incident.

One night I, and about four of I idren *[friends]* a come from a club and as we ease out of the club we a run fi bus, we see a bus and we a run down the bus fi catch it in town. And police man did all

round because if a black man keep a dance dem have police man stand up outside surround it and like say dem a go out a dem way fi all cause some trouble or dem want see trouble cause. We a run fi this bus and I see the police man stand round and one of my idren ready fi jump 'pon the bus and a police man try fi trip him. So same time him side step and him look 'pon him and him laugh and say: "Go way, you is a boy!". The police man look 'pon him and laugh and go whisper to a next friend. (All) that time my idren hold the bus a wait fi we fi catch him up. 'Bout two or three a dem grab him up and start pull him. So when dem a pull him now a next one a my idren look and say: "No, that wrong, 'cause him no do anything, wey you going with." And same time the one who say that dem grab him up as well and dem draw dem trunchon and dem start kick and thump dem.

People a pass, the black youth a pass and dem just a grab on 'pon anyone and fling dem in a the van. When dem fling dem in a the van I try to run round the van fi open to let dem out. When I look in a the van I see all the police man sit down 'pon dem head and a kick dem face and a beat dem. All have dem baton and all spit 'pon dem, hold dem all, a strangle dem till all one a dem all knock out. Him never aware of what was going on. Dem strangle him till him all lose consciousness. When I see I couldn't open the van, so the police man go in the van and one of dem run I down; but I run and get way.

I come back to Handsworth 'cause Is Birmingham town centre it happen. When I come down here I go round and look fi the youth mother and I tell her 'bout it. Same time she send her sister to her sister's man up there to bail him or fi see what's going on. When we go up dey to enquiry, now we ask the police about what's happening to the youth? Him say wecan't see dem and dem been charge fi disorderly conduct. So I said: "how come you charge dem fi disorderly conduct? All dem was doing was running for a bus". Same time dem look 'pon me and say: "Get out, get out of the police station". And I say: "Well, I come to enquire". Him push me till him push me down a step. As him push me I fly back and my hand touch him helmet and him helmet drop off. Him know say it because him push me why him helmet drop off. So him say: "Pick it up". And I wouldn't pick it up, and a next one grab me in a my neck and a push my neck down fi pick it up. When him a push my neck down one a dem swing a kick after me but I did know say is that dem did want to do. You see, that's why I didn't pick it up. Like I was one step ahead of dem. When him kick after me, him miss, and 'cause him miss him never like that, and so him grab I and him throw I down the stairs and try trip up a next brother. Try trip him down and push him and him say: "Oh fuck off wog!" and: "Get away from here before I have you all, and drop robbery charges on you". Him look and say: "Have you ever been framed?" Him start push we about, and him say: "Get off Steelhouse Lane". So as we was walking up, now, and one of dem say: "Let's have that little black cunt at the back". Same time dem walk up to me and grab me in by neck. Dem pull me and dem draw me in the police station. While I in the police station dem look and say: "You going to witness that your 'brethren' dem was disorderly conduct". And I say: "How could I witness and say that?" And same time him say: "Well if you don't do it, we going to charge you with robbery". And I say: "Well, I not going to do it, you have to charge me with, robbery". And dem dey, and five of dem come in and dem start beat me. Dem all go fi wet towel and take off all me clothes and start lick me with the wet towel and kick and thump me up till all me face swell. And dem charge me fi disorderly conduct and wouldn't let me out of the police station. Dem say dem going to give me bail, but dem keep me in there two days, because dem didn't want no-one to see the state that the whole of us was in, because the whole of us did bruise up. Even after I get bail after the two days we had

swellings and bruises and we went to doctor and doctor take picture and write out report and we bring it to court. When we bring it to court we didn't get nothing out of it because the judge believe the police. After all that!

That convince me of the situation with white people against black people that dem is our oppressor. That dem people hate we. Dem regard us lower than dem animals. That is the incident that really show I that we is not one. We is two different set of people completely 'cause I see dem as animals.

The only thing I want say is I want a solution. I want see organisation what can all come with all a solution fi all solve the problem 'cause I can see it a get bad. Right now I know say well dem have some youth a go round and a seek gun, right now I is one of the youth dem all seek a gun. I know say from I catch a police I a go clap him because a what dem a go on with.

I have feelings from slavery from the days of slavery but why these feelings is all still strongly in I is 'cause I see that nothing don't change. The same oppression then is the same oppression now, only in a different form. Right now I know say it a come to a time when all curfew a go dey and man a go all walk with dem gun. If all a police look and say anything, dem a go look and shoot him, or police a go walk with dem gun and shoot man; and is that I see a go come in a this England.

The Need for Respect

The word 'respect' cropped up over and over again in the interviews, and even amongst those who had little or no official contact with the police there was a firm belief that the police were the 'enemy'. Sharon is a 19-year-old Jamaican-born student at a technical college in the city. She had done some voluntary social work in Handsworth and made the following observations.

MY EXPERIENCE of the police is limited at the moment but I know people who have been picked on, victimised for no reason at all except for being black. Had one friend walking down Cavendish Road after 10 o'clock and he was stopped by the police who searched him and wanted to know what he was doing on the streets at that time of night - he is 19. I thought this was supposed to be a free country where one could walk wherever one wanted to.

Also I have had a friend arrested on a demonstration and she was dragged by the hair and thrown into a police van and she was kicked, her arm was twisted behind her back and they locked her legs up in the door. She went to court and they said she attacked them, and that she swore and called them bastards and a whole heap of other dirty words which they couldn't remember because she was speaking in patois. These are just some of things I feel makes the situation between black youths and the police sour because the youths feel that the police are picking on them unnecessarily, victimising them. Anything that happens, if there is a fight between a white and a black person, it does not matter who started it, the black gets the blame for it. So the youths grow up not trusting the police, feeling that they are the enemy - which I believe to be true because they unnecessarily provoke black people.

The only way I can see a solution to this problem between police and black youths is if the police accept the fact that this is a multi-racial country and black youths or black people have just as much right in this country as a white person born over here, and start treating us with the respect that they give to any other law abiding citizen in this country. And realise that we are not here to take over their country or to steal their houses or their women. We just want to live in peace and harmony.

The feeling that white society, and the police in particular, thought of blacks as 'animals' was another constant theme. Paul, for example:

THE reason them a start use dem brutality against I and I is because dem believe say in a them own mind that from time God created man dat white man must rule over black man, and black man is nearest to animal. You see that's why them use them brutality against I and I. All sometime you black now, and you a check through the street dem, dem all a drive dem car slow so as dem can observe you. Them a look 'pon you as a enemy towards them, but I and I is a peaceful man and I don't trouble them.

Alvin, a Jamaican who came to England in 1966, made the same point:

IT NO right man, 'cause as I say, I a work, and I pay my tax and from a man a work and a pay tax even from a man a live in a country, a man freely suppose to walk up and down, go anywhere him want at any time without Babylon come a cheek dem. So you see that's only a example, that no right, man, something must be done about this. We can't live so, as we make a little move we been watch and we been followed and we have to stop to tell dem where we a come from and where we a go to and how long we been dey. Dem no ask the white people that. But from you skin is black dem have to all stop you. Dem want to keep you back. Dem take our culture dem want keep we down as inferior people and dem want to class dem self as superior to we. Something have to be done about this. I just hope them man way a do this interview you know can do something strong about this thing, or else war a go hot in a Babylon, black against white. Just like people in a South Africa, Rhodesia, black against white, you know.

Keith, a 22-year-old Jamaican who has been in England for seven years, emphasises the feeling underlying many of the comments of others when he said he thought the police reacted violently towards blacks because they were afraid they were plotting against white society.

MY PARENTS come over here to work 'cause we have them cheap labour in them time. My parents come over here, them work, them work them finger to the bone. See so, anyway, the policeman, the Parliament, and the Church them, they are the three, them make up the state in Babylon. The Parliament give the orders to the police them, the police carry out the orders and mean say black people in England now really they have no right at all. And Marcus (Garvey) he say: "A race without respect is a race without authority". But even though, we still in England, we try help, we try to work, and get a little money, get a little roof over our head, a little food, and try to do right, but the Babylon don't see we do right. Them call the right the wrong. And the wrong the right. The least good move you make, them ready fi carry you go a court.

Anyway still, policeman, them if you have a little... I don't know, them, them just don't like see black people, congregating and no, kind of unity. Them think say we plotting against them. Just like in the days of slavery when every slave them gather together for have a little talk with themself you find out from the slave-driver them come and say them is a plot to overthrow them.

Is the same thing going on now. Right now in England here. Them don't really want see black people thrive. Them pretend say them want see black people thrive. My mother and my father even them, who come and slave for England here, can't even walk the streets in peace, them get insulted, them call them names, they even beat them up. My own parents, my own mother and father, and them say this country is a country - they think of human rights, them talk about human rights - is no human rights in this country. Is no rights for black people at all and a man can't understand how a man, a man, can be so wicked against another man.

Charles, a Rastafarian, emphasised the need for West Indians to feel that they had equal place in society.

I AM NOT a politician 'cause politics is a load of trash but I am living in trash ruled by trash so I have no alternative but to get rid of the trash. I am not a violent revolutionary but the oppressor is using a violent force to rehabilitate I and I brothers and sisters who refused to be the machine to keep the economy going. Our children will come after us and do the same, walk the streets without a good pair of shoes, hungry bellies, go to work and come home, and still have to beg on the streets in order to get to work. And we totally refuse to do that. We need a place in society so our race can be looked upon equal to the white race who totally dominate the good morals of society. They seem to dominate the good morals of society because they are the ones who are living above us. When it comes to surviving, they have it easy compared to us because the areas with the most beautiful houses and the most posh lives. It is the people of this country who was here before us have that facility and it was us who built it for them. It we live amongst them we been oppressed, we been thrown out by them, and used by the police to keep the police-force active. If them want practice them come to the ghettos where black people are, and they drive around the streets and they look at black youths and say: "Here is some exercise, let's go and have this one, give us something to do". And that is how we are being oppressed.

The Fear Factor

The extent of the fear and dislike of the police among young blacks is indicated in the following interview with Julian, a youth club leader at a Methodist Church in Balsall Heath. Julian runs a disco on Wednesdays but has a very real fear that the police will find some way to stop even this perfectly ordinary and organised activity.

THE WAY I come to be in this church and running this club is that I was in the Boys' Brigade and I started from there and work me way up, and dem just tell me that I could run this club down here. So that's the way I really get this club, you see. The club is alright really, we have a lot of black youths coming down and come on a Wednesday night and enjoy themselves, but is only because the police don't find out about this club yet. But I feel that if dem even find out about this club, really, dem can't do nothing, 'cause is with the church. And the church say we can run it 'pon a Wednesday and hold disco and make black people just get together and live as one, not separated, you know. So when you look at it now you have to say: well, what kind of things black people can do to help black people. The way I see it I hold this club 'pon a Wednesday night fi keep the youths dem off the streets. Stop dem harassing the people them on the street and

things, and dem alright now. Dem all come down ya a Wednesday night pay dem ten pence, twenty pence when a disco on, and things just running cool 'cause what no police no find out about it yet.

This deep-rooted mistrust of the police is itself a potential source of trouble. An interview with a student at Birmingham University produced the following analysis of the problem.

THE reason why black kids are being picked upon is that some of them, to be honest, do not appreciate the situation they are in. They have the impression that the police are after them. Now, I think they should give the opposite impression because I think when they go out a lot of black kids - and I used to be like this when I went out - expect to be picked on. If you go around with that attitude expecting, expecting, the day will come and as soon as the policeman speaks to you, you just hit him and you don't realise what you have done, 'cause you have actually hated him from the first time you met him.

The police ought to be trained to work in a multi-racial environment. And I think they should train them to respect more than they do, because they don't respect nobody. A policeman thinks he is the boss, which is silly. Also the panda cars are creating trouble. A policeman patrolling the street is in contact with the community. If you were able to get more police in contact with the community, then they would be able to go back to their superiors and tell them that most of the guys are not the way they think they are. So, I think having police on foot instead of in cars would make the place much better.

Kids wouldn't be picked up, because if the policeman knows me, for instance, he will say well, he's not that sort of boy so let him go. There needs to be more police co-ordination with the blacks.

Even the most casual reader will have been struck by the deep sense of frustration felt by many of the younger generation of blacks, a feeling that every avenue - employment, education, housing, social and legal justice, cultural identity - is closed to them. It brings out, as in this interview with Prince, a deep yearning for some kind of initiative from both blacks and the authorities to improve the situation.

BUT RIGHT now the way I man see things I man out here, I man na work and I man just a get brutalise by dem beast. Man, don't want thief and man don't want war with dem things. But man want dunsu (money) and things like that fi put in a him pocket. And if you don't thief and if you don't get no money off the dole, boy, dem beast ya have a whole heap fi say when you don't have no dunsu in a you pocket. Dem can just pick 'pon you just like that.

I and I see things rough, man, the way dem beast ya a treat people, and the way dem white man ya a treat people, dem just a treat people like dog. I and I know say we are no dog. I man feel say I man more is a man than him. Because the way him show I man you know. But the way I man see things is that dem man ya suppose to give I and I something so that I and I can be independent.

I and I really want to go home. But as I say, we don't even have no dunsu fi buy some food out a the road, before we go say go home. And we know say dem white man ya have it fi give I and I, and we entitled to it. I man no know wa a go on, you know. But is that I man would like to find out, wa a go on? And I man a call 'pon the leader dem fi come forward and show us what a go on, because things bad, man. We condition what we a live in a worse than a dog.

Education bad. Right now the youth dem I man can talk but there is always somebody else, there is all the youth dem wa fi come. Dem don't have nothing. We don't have nothing. So what we a go show dem when dem come? Nothing. So right now I man would a like these so called black youth leaders and dem community people and Social Security and all dem people dey fi forward dem-self and show II and I wa dem a go on with. Well anyway, if dem no do it, we a go forward. And that mean to say is either blood a go run, or fire a go burn, or water a go drown. But right now I man no mind if dem take away I man flesh tis day ya. As long as I people dem get something. Because dem dey down ya too long a work. No man, I and I want work, we want work yes, but we don't have no job fi go in. We don't have no dunsu. What you expect we fi do; Nothing?

Black Police: an Answer?

The question of whether more black policemen would ease the tension produced a wide range of opinions. Noel, a young Rastafarian, thought more black police would be a source of internal conflict within the black community.

I THINK many times that we are provoked by police officers into retaliating and thus we find ourselves in trouble with them. We are provoked in such a way that there is nothing else we can do but to retaliate. I think the relationship isn't a one-sided thing where the black kids go out on the street and cause trouble, I know there are a fair amount of blacks who do this though, and cause trouble, but I think many blacks are provoked and troubled by police officers.

I was walking down the street with a friend, it was fairly late at night and three police officers pulled up in a car and started roughing us up and pushed us against the car, searching our pockets, saying: "Where have you black bastards come from?" and "you shouldn't be out the street at this time of night", hoping that we would retaliate so that we would find ourselves in jail at night, but we kept our head and answered their question and did not retaliate.

In some instances, we have been walking down the street and we have been stopped and searched in a very unfriendly way. And there have been instances where there have been large fights breaking out. There was one time when we were at a disco and there was a number of blacks who couldn't get in, the kids that were outside, standing outside, that couldn't get in, and the police just came and started arresting everyone, just throwing them into the vans for nothing and I saw a police officer hit a girl with a baton in her belly. The girl was pregnant.

I was very surprised at how the police officers knocked out one kid as he was trying to run away, the police car went after him and knocked him down, whether it was intentional or not I don't know, that's what happened. I managed to run away cause I just didn't want to get arrested, so I just ran. But this shows how conflict can erupt.

Unless police officers use a more humane attitude in dealing with blacks, then I think this situation could inflate and get much worse and could spread on to the older members of the black race and there will be great racialism on the street and in the community as well. I think the police officers should be educated in dealing in such a racial problem, and unless they are given this education, then the situation will get worse and there will be more and more incidents as I have mentioned.

I think they are trying to solve this problem by bringing more black police officers into the police force but personally I think it doesn't work, cause it only makes the black youth more suspicious against the black policeman. I don't think this is the best way to do it at all. It only causes conflict between black and black then, and causes division amongst black community. If the white man's way of doing things is not effective, then using black against black won't solve the problem at all.

The same point was made by Lambuston, who at that time was on a Government training course, having just left school. He suspected that the introduction of more black policemen would be a deliberate tactic to further divide the West Indian community.

WE HAVE to find a way to protect ourselves against police brutality, and harassment against the black people, and against all the lies and things that is said against us. Dem a try to recruit black policemen now but I don't really trust dem either, I see dem as white policeman. 'Cause even last week we da a dance, right, and we see black policeman a beat up black man, the men just a stop there and a watch the black policeman, so we can't really say we trust him either 'cause him is just the same. He is a Babylon same way, you know. When him have that uniform on him is the same to me. It is hard to respect him, because all I could say if he is my father I wouldn't want to know him again. If more and more black people being recruited on the force it's going to cause more and more aggravation, you know, and it's just going to be black against black, black police against black youths instead of white against black. And when black fight against all colour we na fight fi no cause at all.

I see that as a Babylon policy to divide the black community, we is all divided as it is, right, but the white man a try to spread us like all four corners of the world so that we can never set together and be strong. To use our brains and knowledge and get higher education and things we na get nowhere, 'cause right now dem just suss up 'pon we. Like when we read the newspaper about black people, is all white people write it, so, you can't really get the true views. So this thing it like it to bring everything out into open 'cause the black people a talk and anything. Say how white people is, how dem stay, how dem ways is, how the Babylon is how dem wicked. Well most of dem is wicked, but we can't say all, you know.

We would a like show you the way how we feel, how the black man feel from the black man point of view for the first time. And I hope say dem read this and see how we feel about them and how we feel how dem treating us, so dem can see what sort of things dem a cause. Dem a cause brutality and war, we going get a war sooner or later the way dem a go on 'cause black man can't really take it no longer, and I hope say that this show dem say we can't take much more 'cause is too much really. I hope after they read this report they do something fi try to improve the relationship between black and white, especially between black youths and the police before any war and things. We can't stand this oppression any more, we can't stand this pressure. We either get out or we fight back and a lot of us born here. So the only thing we know is to fight and we will fight. With black, white, all colour but we a fight for a cause and I hope they see that before anything happen.

Even those who favoured the idea of more black policemen saw problems. Rudy, an apprentice at an engineering works, thought one of the major stumbling blocks was that the police image was so unfavourable that few young blacks would be interested in joining.

I WOULDN'T say I hate dem (police) but I don't like dem 'cause dem too rough, dem can't deal with the right. When dem a go on with all this then I feel say dem should get more black police man to deal with black youths. But then again the black youth dem see what the white police man dem a deal with, dem really don't want to go in a the force because dem see the way dem lie and dem go on rough to everybody and dem say well we na go do that to other people 'cause dem is human as well and we class everybody as human. So we can't really say we a go join force and deal that rough way because that is not our way of life.

'Cause when me go to Jamaica, policeman talk to you and have manners to you 'cause you is black. Dem can talk to you and you can understand dem. When dem ones here a talk to you dem grab you and dem squeeze you, dem want you do action so dem can pull you in and say this and that you do. So I don't really check dem that way, I call dem the wicked. I don't like dem really.

I would a like see something done about this. More relationship between black and white police man. Well, I na go say the white people, is the white policeman, 'cause dem is mostly the one that harasses and all that. Something has to be done very fast 'cause black people no go sit down no longer and wait on dem. Black people a go fight back. We a go fight back, we na go sit down and take it too long. Well, what I would really like to see get done is that them have to broadcast more about the black race, 'cause right now we quiet, not many people a come round and a ask black people opinion and all this fi make dem hear it and make dem know how we feel. This man a do a nice thing ya, to make everybody know say how black people feel. Probably the police man dem self might a listen and understand how we feel about this thing ya. We just want dem to do something fast 'cause what time a go dread 'cause we na go take it too long. Dem a push us at the limit right now, we na go take that, we a go fight back hard, black youth, so we stay.

Tony was born in Ethiopia and awaiting the results of his 'O' levels when we spoke to him. He thought more black police would be a good idea, although he could see how this would put them in an awkward social position within the black community.

THERE was an incident when I was coming to Northfield Road Grosvenor Centre, and someone started causing disturbances over the other Centre. So the manager called the police over and the police came in and had a word with the manager. The manager led them to three people, confusing them with me - the police came straight to me and started picking on me saying: "What's going on?" and this and that, and there was three white lads with me.

As I have had these experiences with the police, it doesn't give me a lot of respect for them so I think that any treatment they get from black people, they deserve it because they say that because we are black we are daft. I reckon that to ease the tension, it would be better to have more black policemen to patrol the black areas.

I think that the sooner the policemen change their attitude towards black youths and try to calm the situation, like when you're trying to help someone but at the same time trying to find out what they've been doing - that way the black man won't raise his voice and say white policemen are trying to pick them up for something they didn't do. The thing between the black people and the police is that as long as the police have no respect for us, the black has no respect for them. The police must have more communications and more education to know about the black people. Otherwise the situation can never change.

The Job Problem



Although all of those interviewed were asked only the one specific question about relations with the police, the replies, as we have already seen, ranged over a wide spectrum of black experience. The lack of jobs and the subsequent problems caused by unemployment featured quite spontaneously in some interviews. Peter, for example, mirrored the frustrations felt by many.

THE way things a go on, it a go on rough, you know, me a tell you man. Because one time I man fi go an this job and the man all treat I man some ways, I don't feel a dog could go through it. Is like you in a poverty, the man dem owe you money and dem don't want to give you money. You go up a the dole and dem say your pad is run out and dem cut you off. When you go fi money dem say dem send caller round you house, that time dem don't send nobody. And that a put you in a all confusing spots. You can't even get a flat - you have to squat. And if you go squat dem come in with all a court order and dem come throw you out and it go on and on like that. I want to work, but dem do not want to let me work. Dem say I don't want to work but me tell dem say me want to work but dem na give me nothing. All through the colour of me skin dem a go on like that. If is a white boy now things would have been different, but being as it is black dem just say, cha [*don't want to know*]. Something have to be done, because dem people they are hypocritical people. If dem say yes to you, an hour's beat dem say dem never say that. If you get it in writing that is the only way you can hold dem, 'cause something have to be done.

The same point was made by Mohammed, an Asian who has many West Indian friends and who helps out at a youth club.

I HAVE been with black people for about eight years, and I have been going round with them to dances, with sound systems, the lot. All I have to say is that the police are pushing black youths

too much, and they have no places to go. Most of the black youths that go to the Job Centre to find a job get turned down and that really causes a lot of trouble with the black nation. It's hard to find a job and they are on the road, and they have got to look for something, and so they get into bad habits. So, at the moment, when the clubs are open, the police come there too often and cause trouble, and push harder than they are supposed to push.

After school I didn't find a job 'cause there is so many people out of work and the amount that go for one job is ridiculous. But mostly I find that the English people get the jobs first, and the blacks are left out on most occasions because of the way they're dressed or something like that.

If the police would approach the black younger generation more fairly there is not much trouble to be caused, but the police are not approaching the black younger generation in a proper manner so therefore, there is trouble sometimes. I have found it very easy to be with black people, going to clubs and dances. I have a son at the moment and I don't want anything to happen to him at all. If I could unite with black people then I am sure that the police could unite with black people, in a proper manner.

Going Home

The disillusionment about employment prospects felt by some of the young men interviewed had led some to consider leaving Britain. Influenced by Rastafarianism perhaps, and the search for cultural identity, interviewees such as David felt that repatriation might be the answer.

NOW IS twelve years since I been in this country, and I came to this country to be a better man. I went to school in this country and I have qualification from first year to third year, qualified as carpentry and joinery. I have my certificate. It is no good to me in this country because if I show it they will not accept it. What they have to offer me is low down job. I know I have a better qualification than that. I am living in Handsworth and in this ghetto here it is I and I brethren and we all going through the same tribulation. We all are oppressed by the white man.

I love this country, I love all the English people them, I love what they bring in front of my eyes. But they force I fi hate dem, by forcing I to steal, by forcing I to use violence, by forcing I to commit all sort of 'ism. They bring their own law against I and take I out of my bed. They even come and mash up my house. And what come out of that? Nothing. Where is my people that suppose to help I? I can't see no papers to show I where I stand in this country. I have been here too long. I don't want no favours from dem no more. Take it from I, not only from I, but from I brethren. We want to go home. We don't want to stay here no more. We want a grant to set up ourselves when we go over there. We don't want to depend on our own poor people over there. We want dem to give us what we need and let us go over there. We want to be free. We want to go to our father's land where you brought us from. Oh Lord! Save I and I that are in this hell. We want to go where the sun is shining where I can be free in my forefathers' land. I know I am a slave. I can't take it no longer. Free I. Free I.

I don't want to steal. I can't get no job. Your job you offer I is what you offer dogs. The law treat us like animals. I have been to jail. I know what it is like. It is disgrace. They try to brainwash us. But it is only my faith, oh Father. It is only my faith. I know their system (and) how it works. You

can't fool I no more. Your days are numbered. I don't want no favours. I just want to be free like a bird in the tree.

A similar sense of the lack of positive alternatives led Derrick to the same conclusions.

I MAN been in a lot of trouble with the police. Take for instance the other day. I man was just coming down from I brethren yard. I man just all a walk up the road. All a police panda come and stop I man. Dem just come out the car and just come chuky 'pon I man. Grab I man up, take I man to the station and keep I man in remand sometime. Charge I man fi assaulting dem and some other offences. Dem charge I man £60 in court and that is just one of the things which police have done to I man. Not only I alone but unto I brethren dem.

So I man don't like the way the police dem been treating I and I, and I man notice say I can't really get no justice from the police. So I man would like to all leave out a this land ya 'cause this isn't the place for I man. There is nothing going on that is right. Babylon don't really have nothing to offer I. They don't even give I no work, can't get no job. Can't get no money. Don't even have a roof over I head. Is just social, and wa dem a deal with can't even buy food, much less pay rent, buy clothes and other things. I don't like this justice ya 'cause there is none.

I go to school over here for a couple years and where this education system a work they don't really show you nothing about the black man self. Is all about the white man history. Is nothing for you to know bout yourself over here. Is all that I want to know I have to seek for myself. I man can't take this no longer. If things have to carry on that way, is like say, man have to just tolerate, and I can't really tolerate dem no more. If dem keep on oppressing I dem way dey I have to just fight back. And if is blood, let it run.

Politics & Racism

Very few of those we talked with had any experience of contact with the police in anything other than confrontation situation. Denzil, a 19-year-old who works as a shoe repairer, was an exception. He gave this account of day-to-day contact with a beat officer.

WHERE I work the police come into the shop. Every day of the week now there is a policeman come in there, he is the local policeman on the beat. He is always talking to me trying to explain to me that the police don't really hate black people. He explain to me himself that there is a few police on the force that don't like black people, and they will go out and make trouble. I don't ask him no name or nothing but that's what he said to me. I ask him how many of the policemen ever see black men and take dem into jail and kind of beat them up, which is true, 'cause I see my own friends - the bruises and things what they get in jail for one night they been in there.

I see a man that get beat up one night and I say to him: "Well, how did you get that?". He said: "that's what the policeman do to me". So I ask the policeman if these kind of things really happen. So he says if they are drunk and they fall upstairs that's their fault ain't it? And I say to him how can a man fall upstairs? He said if you are drunk you can fall anywhere. He says you take it from there.

Really and truly I think there is a bad situation between the black youth and the police man. There is no peace, every time you read the newspaper a policeman get beat up by black people. They only telling one side of the story, which is the white man's side. They don't tell you what actually happen. Something which would solve all this problem is I think get those sophisticated people - because when I say sophisticated they think we only think about white man - if you get some black ones (we got sophisticated people as well), get them together with the real top man and get them in front of even the Prime Minister. Let them talk to these police chief man to man, and probably a few of the youths that really get botheration from the police. Let them explain what happens, because even the police chief themself only gets one side of the story and don't want to really hear what's happening. If they hear for themselves what's really happening then they could do something about it. That's the only way I could see it's going to solve problem between the black youths and the policeman these days.

At least one of those we interviewed attempted a more comprehensive, philosophical analysis of the reasons behind the conflict. A has worked with community organisations in Handsworth, and written for and edited a community newspaper.

I AM CONCERNED with psychological harassment, that is the spirit behind the law, right? I am concerned with what is the reason behind police harassment. If the police on their own initiative take it up on them self to harass black people more than they harass other ethnic groups in the society, then we have a cause for concern here.

In order to be able to understand police harassment we have to look for the political causes and to be able to understand those causes we have to look further, right to the moral principle behind the law. In Sanskrit there is a word called 'Dharma' which means the righteous principle behind the law. It is my contention that there is no such righteous principle, there is purely a pragmatic spirit behind the law which was in any case the result of the imperialistic conquests of the Roman Empire. The English law, if it has substance at all, takes its spirit from Roman Law, the law of barbarians, the law of pagans.

The Asians, the people from India, and we must not forget that many of them were born here, right, they have been imbued for thousands of years with a culture alien to western Christianity, but the evidence that the pacifism of their religion cannot at all, in any way, compensate for the psychological alienation that is meted out by the western community. And so the evidence that retaliation on the part of the Asian young people is on the increase is becoming self evident.

Now with the so-called West Indian minority community, it is a different question. There is the need to organise something called black nationalism - there is no real philosophy of black nationalism. In order to deal with the manifestation of racism, then the black man will have to construct a doctrine that will be able to allow him to liberate himself from the strains of racism.

There are the black nationalist groups, who believe in violent confrontation if the need arises. There is the Rasta group. They dictate peace and love, but they are confronted by the need to survive in the community along side with the need to be committed to peace and love. And there is a third element, the Muslims and which I happen to be one right now. In Islam there is no way that turning the other cheek can be the philosophy of a man who is oppressed. It is an indictment of your lack moral fibre if you do not retaliate in any kind to that which is done to you.

Now, how can the black man retaliate? When I say I want to deal with spiritual aspect of police harassment, I am not too concerned with the police, cause they're just men in uniforms. I am concerned with the men that have the brains, that put them in the uniforms. How can they be attacked? There is a semantic and psychological gap between the reality that's external to this country, England, and the reality that England imposes upon the consciousness of the ethnic minority groups in this country. There is cultural-education and psychological-semantic gap between the external reality, which will inevitably determine to what extent black people will be liberated in this country. Not only are we in a minority in this country numerically, but also in a minority educationally and hence a minority culturally. So we cannot possibly retaliate on the psychological front. I am sure that every black person over the age of consciousness is aware of the need for a separate existence psychologically 'cause you cannot live geographically in alien territory and remain immune to it in education.

If some black people are atheist and some are X and some are Y and some are Z we will only be fighting ad hoc racism, we won't be fighting the spirit behind racism. Men are divided according to creed and because of their different creed, there is no unity even within the same groups. I do not believe in taking up arms with any other man or with any group of men in order to tight my oppressors unless I know that when we put down the arms we won't be fighting among ourself.

The last interview in this section tells a depressingly familiar story of harassment - but with a warning it would be foolish to ignore.

I'M GONNA show you a next incident now. I and I brethren did a walk down the Stratford Road. One time now, a wicked [*policeman*] pull up behind I. Call I name. So I man turn round for say: "How you know I man name?" Him say: "Come here", and I say: "If you want I, come to I, 'cause you know I name already". So him come out of him car and him told I. I and him did a wrestle and I man drop him. I man did a walk 'cause I no run. So him phone for more wicked and them come. Them bring I a Steelhouse Lane and them bring I down and say to I: "Now, you going go through that iron door there". The door lock, you know, him have a dog behind them, and behind I man. He say if I don't run through that door the dog go a bit I. So I say: "I not go make myself look like idiot now, try run through iron door and no dog go a bit I, because if a dog bit I, I kill it". So now, them open the door and three of them come in there. A small one, a next one higher than him, and another one higher than him. Hear him, the small one: "I'm here to nurse you". Next one: "I am here to soothe you". And the big one him say: "I here for kill you". So me say to them now: "Right now you two small ones, go, and let this big one here come and try and kill I". So me and him in dey, man, and I man drop him. Him a grab I, man, and him grab two scissors and him put them in a I hair, dem put two scissors in a I hair, you know, I cry, you know, Rasta. I cry man. Me draw out the scissors and I in dey with dem. I man just a cut, cut, cut, cut, and I don't know if I cut dem, up to this day. I man just a swing this scissors, dem say I mad, mentally disturbed. Take I to court. Get all a £50 fine. Say I man mad. Black. Mad. All you blacks are the same, stupid and mad, crazy like animals. Me say yea, so it should be.

Right now this thing ya have to stop. 'Cause what Marcus Garvey show you, say, when the two sevens clash, it a go well dread. If this thing don't stop, this police brutality, I man personally take dem life.

Section Two - The Parents



AFFOR interviewed nine parents representing a wide spectrum of opinion. Like the kids, they were asked for their views on the relationship between black youth and the police. The statements illustrate the wide divergence of opinion amongst black parents on this subject, from those who believe that the racist nature of society is to blame, to those who think that all that is needed is for black youths to 'conform'. An appreciation by a black social worker of how the years of slavery, colonialism and poverty have affected the culture and opinions of black West Indians appear at the start of the report.

Racism in Society

Mr. A. is a parent who firmly believes that young blacks are being harassed by the police and courts. His opinion is that this stems from the racist nature of a society which allows proportionally more blacks to be unemployed than whites. He does, however, think that the situation can be changed for the better.

WE FIND, this whole situation very distressing and very puzzling. We can't understand why it is that the police has set out to harass and victimise black youths. We came from the Caribbean a very long time ago, but in the Caribbean we are taught to respect the police. We are taught that the police are our friends and the police are there to protect us. We know that the police will always protect us and the police are only interested in arresting criminals and wrong-doers. We try to instill these same principles in our children. We taught them that the police were their friends and that they should respect the police. Now, today we find that the police has become the enemy of our children. Well, the police are setting out to harass and to terrorise our children in every way possible.

Years ago, when we used to hear about the police attacking black youths going into youth clubs and harassing them, stopping them on the street and harassing them, arresting them for the least provocation, we could not believe it. We believed that the youths really were making it all up, we find it difficult to believe that a police, who is supposed to be the best police in the world, could stoop to this kind of level to make our children's life a misery.

But, after years of experience we have come to realise that it is true, that the police are setting out to terrorise our children. Now we can't understand why all this is happening but we believe that it is a deliberate plan. We believe that it is a plan that has started out since 1968 when Enoch Powell made his speech about his rivers of blood thing, and that the police are now setting out to make that prophecy come true. We believe that they are setting the whole thing up so they will have rivers of blood on the streets.

Now, the last thing we want is to have a society rife with racial conflict: the last thing we want is to have a society where the police cannot be trusted and where the police are seen as the enemy. But we can no longer go on blaming ourselves, we can no longer go on thinking that we are the ones that are wrong; that because we come from a different cultural background that we don't understand what is happening; and that we don't understand the principles of this society 'cause we know that this is not true, this is not true at all. We have lived here for many, many years and in all that time we have worked steadily and hard, we have worked to give our children everything that we possibly can. We try to give them a good education. We try to bring them up in the right and proper way and we believe that we have done our best, yet it appears that even that is not good enough for this society. Being involved with the Trade Union Movement and being involved with the whole social situation for many, many years in this area of Birmingham, I know for a fact that while the Government have been telling people or promising working people that we will always have full employment, that there will always be jobs for us, but at that same time we saw massive cutbacks, industries being run down, industries being moved out of particular areas. And at all times we saw that the youngsters would have no jobs to go to and would have no real future.

Now why isn't the state doing something about this? Why isn't the state trying to create industry so youngsters can have a job, so they can have the chance to get apprenticeship, so they can have the chance to build themselves a decent future. It seems to me as nobody is doing that. All that is happening is that the police have been strengthened, that the Magistrate Courts and all the courts in the land are becoming more and more vicious, that they see it now as a matter of course to

send our children off to borstals, to send them off to prison for little or no reason, now what are they doing to us?

I believe that society has been able to create a criminal class in this society. The police had always believed that there was a criminal class; that there was a certain section of white workers that were bound to be criminals, But, it appears to me what they have done now is to create a criminal class; that there is certain section of black people that will be criminals and they will do everything to make that possible. Now this is a very helpless situation to us 'cause all we ever wanted in this society was a decent job, decent place to live and to be left alone to go on about our business and to carry out our functions as law abiding people in this society. Now at the moment this is becoming more and more impossible. It is becoming difficult to even sleep at nights, without being afraid of a knock on the door or to even a telephone call to say that your son is in jail, or your daughter has been picked up at some youth club. And when you investigate and find out what is happening you realise that the child has done nothing, has done nothing at all except that the police had gone into a club; raided a youth club, harassed as many of them as they possibly can and just arrested at random different people. And your child or children might be one of those that are arrested.

Now we are getting very, very tired of this whole situation; we are getting very tired of the society taking it for granted that if we are black people we are automatically bad. What, seems to me, nobody is bothering to stop and look at is the fact that the conditions that are created by the society are giving our children very little choice. It is giving our children no choice at all 'cause as long as you are convicted of any crime in this society it limits your scope to get a decent job in the Civil Service, in any Government establishment and in very many firms. Because, firms do not want to employ people who have been to prison. Firms do not want to employ people who have criminal records and yet it appears to me that the police are going out of their way to harass all our children.

Now at this moment we are still trying desperately to get our sons, to get our children to understand that we cannot and we should not set out to attack the police or to fight them, we have to try and show them that the police are doing a job, however distasteful, however depressive is to us. But it is not the police themselves who are the real culprits in this thing but the people who actually employ the police, the people who actually instruct the police in what they have to do and what they have to carry out. Now we believe that a change has got to come. We believe a change has got to come where people in this society start to regard people, black and white, as people. Where we have to be seen and respected on our merit, where the criminals among the white, or the criminals amongst the black, must be treated as criminals but that black youths must not be made into criminals, but black youths must not be pushed into situations where they are forced to fight back against the police. Where they are forced back and them be charged with assault, GBH and all this kind of thing, which enables the state to send them to prisons for a very, very long time.

We believe that what has to happen now is that black parents in this area must start to get together, we must start to get together, we start to look at the problems that we face, and we must start to put immense pressure in particular Governmental areas, areas that are responsible for Social Services, areas that are responsible for education, areas that are responsible for all

these things that now control and govern our lives, and that we must make sure that the changes are taking place in those areas. We must make sure that the state realises that we have no intention of sitting back and being victimised and being beaten up. We must also, all parents, realise that our children are now being pressured, that our children are being placed in a siege situation. They are under siege and we must start to stand up for our children.

We must stop believing policemen or believing the courts when the courts say our children have done this, our children have done that, we must stop accepting these things as absolute right and absolute truth. If we do not back up our children, the state will make them into convicts, the state will make them into thieves, the state will eventually destroy them.

We have spent years and years in this country, our children are born in this country, our children have no places to go, they have no Caribbean homes, they have no African homes, they are here because they were born here, they are English people, if we do not back them up and if we allow the state to destroy them, then we have no future at all. Black people will be eradicated from this society, and any contribution that we have made, or we had to make will never ever come to fruition in this society. We have to start to understand the law a lot more, we have to start to understand the way the law is used against us and start to find ways of using that same law against the law breakers. We have to start to realise that it does not matter whether the man is a police or a judge, or whatever, if he breaks the law he should be subjected to the same conditions that they are now putting our children in.

I believe that the situation can still be changed, that at this moment we can still reverse many of the change that is taking place. I believe that we can still create conditions in this society where the state starts to recognise us and starts to realise that we are being brutalised, we are being harassed. That is our task and we must start to get together with our children, get together with other parents, and start to build something that will be effective enough to have a real voice in all the areas that now control our lives.

Mr. G. is the father of four children ranging from eight to 16, all of whom were born in this country. Although none of his kids have been in contact with the police, he knows other kids and parents of kids who have. Like Mr. A he feels that the police do harass black youngsters and gives examples. He also agrees with Mr. A's assertion that the racist nature or society is at the root of the problem.

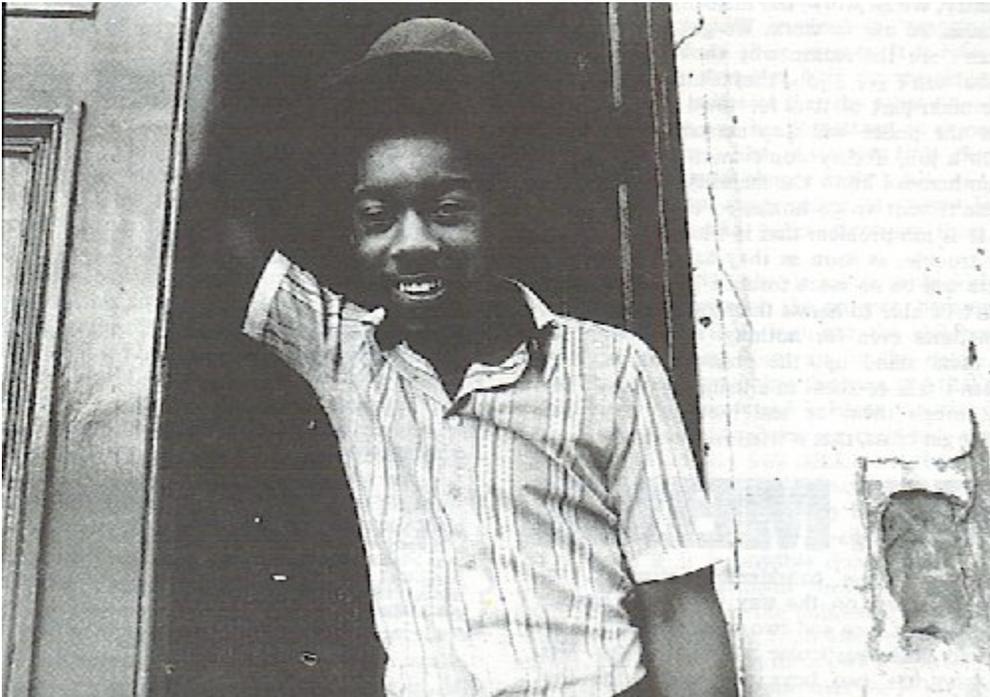
REGARDING THE relationship between black kids and the police, let me say that my opinion is not based on any personal experience, fortunately for me my children being in the age group of sixteen to eight, have not at this moment had occasion to fall on the other side of the law or come in contact with the police for whatever reasons. Therefore my opinion is based on observations - made from other black kids and based also on the opinion and attitudes of black parents who have kids who have been in contact with the police. Nonetheless, it does not bar me as a West Indian parent and as a black residing in the U.K. from forming my opinions, and I think it is fair to say that some of the real cause of conflict between the police and black kids is due to the fact that here is a racist society, the laws reflect this. You can take as something specific the Race Relations Act which was formed under a supposedly Socialist Government; you can take the attitude of employers and indeed society itself, and the attitude of black kids is a result of the conflict and the laws which causes the conflict which exists in British society.

Further to that, there have been several instances where black kids, groups of youths in the age group of 15 to 18 returning home from a game of cricket, they get on the bus, joking, making a lot of noise. Nonetheless they are young kids, they are not doing anything that a lot of kids haven't or wouldn't be doing. The bus driver takes exception to it, ask them to leave. He says, look I want you off, they refuse to go. It is one of these buses that have a link up with the guards and in no time the police is there. They were forcibly removed from the bus and were charged for making themselves a nuisance. This happened in Ladywood some years back, around '71. Some of the kids that were involved in that incident I knew personally. When the police came to cart them away they were very angry and they retaliated and of course the police reacted in like manner, so they were not only charged with causing a nuisance on the bus, they were also charged with assaulting police.

An isolated case you would say? Not really. There are similar instances that have occurred also in Ladywood, where a group of kids again coming home from Judo. The inspector gets on the bus, chap shows his ticket, inspector says the chap is over-ridden, the chap says he isn't 'cause he has paid the correct fare it is just a question of when he collected the ticket out of the automatic dispenser. He probably never got the right one. The inspector refused to accept the chap's explanation, he is asked to leave the bus, he declined to leave, the police is called in. They came on the bus this time with dogs. They get out of the bus and they think that's the end of the incident, they started to walk home 'cause it was late at night. They haven't been walking 10 minutes and they are descended upon by a bunch of these special group. Some are carted off, I could see one of these Ford Transit vans approaching, they were hardly suspicious, and they took off in different directions, nonetheless some were caught. And what were they charged for, they were trumped up charges, it was alleged that these kids were disorderly, and again police assault.

Now incidents like these, which are reported, are not isolated in any way. The West Indian community, in particular the young people, are very much aware of what takes place in society and in fact knows what to expect. They are angry because of the injustice, and they know that they have a right to be in this country. Unlike their parents who came as immigrants, they were born here, so they were born British Citizens and they are not prepared to take the insulting behaviour from authority without resisting it. One may well ask what logical conclusion one arrives at. After a while it gets boring to recount incidents after incident, it is only the tip of the ice. You have to qualify it also by saying, that it is not a one-sided thing. One must also recognise if one wishes to be totally honest, that there are black villains, just as there are white villains and they come in all age groups. Therefore, it doesn't follow that all black kids who have been picked up by the police have been done injustice, some have, make no mistake about it, gone out and deliberately set out to break the laws. What is really needed in this British society is a radical change, a complete checkup in the system, to the extent that when a policeman can look at a black guy and not see a black but see a citizen, then and only then, you will start having true justice for blacks and indeed minority groups in this society. You could really have peaceful co-existence in this society.

The Job Problem



Mrs. M has direct experience of the conflict between the police and black youths, as her son has been in trouble. Like Mr. A she believes that much of the problem can be traced back to the lack of job opportunities for young blacks. Her son's case is particularly pointed as he is well qualified and yet he has not been able to find work.

I HAVE got a son out there. My son has come in contact with the police as well, so I sent him to school. I put out so much money both for clothes, shoes and everything. The Government doesn't give me nothing. He has got three 'A' levels and he has got four 'O' levels and he has finished school now. He is looking for a job.

Instead of a job they call him at the social and they hand him money. I don't think that is right for a young boy. He should have a job to know that he must earn his living but instead of that they hand him money. Now he doesn't want to work at all, you can't tell him nothing at all about work. I don't think that is right. That's what this Government do.

Now they get involved with other boys. They go out on the streets when they have these pushers out there sell them drugs and everything like that. After they get involved with this drugs and everything then the police start on them. They don't try to investigate to find out what happen, you have a mother, have you got a father, right, seek after that now. They start to beat up, they throw them in jail and everything like that. I don't think that is right.

I think this Government is doing a lot of things to these kids, I think whenever they leave school they should prepare a job for them to go straight into, so that they could know how to earn a

living for themselves. The way how we grow up, we go to work, learn to work and to support ourselves and we come into this country, we all work, the majority of us work, because we use to work. We got to work. So I can't see the reason why these kids leaving school can't get a job, they should get a job. The main part of it is for them to get a job, now the police will stop harassing them. Get them a job, if they don't want to work, send them home. I know the majority of them they doesn't want to go home, so they will work. It is job problem that is what is making all the trouble, as soon as they have job working there will be no more trouble. Then the police won't be able to harass them or pick on them, sometimes even for nothing. If two or three of them stand up, the police walk in, they doesn't talk to them in a mannerly way. They just rough them up and they get cross, the police get cross, that is what happen.

The Media



In recent years considerable attention has been focused on the way the media handles the issue of race and two of the parents interviewed made particular mention of this. Mrs. J who has two boys and a girl, felt that publicity was made out of nothing and Mrs. Y complained of the way all blacks were referred to as "West Indians" on the flimsiest evidence. First Mrs. J:

EVERY DAY you wake up you read the paper they are talking about the black youths, they are so busy thinking about the black youths in Handsworth that they have no time to think about what the white youth in Handsworth or the half-caste youths in Hands-worth are doing. They need a chance to survey. They need a chance to live and this society is not giving them that chance. Everyday you pick up the paper it's there every day you turn on the radio it's there, the whole media lives off the young black youths of today. And they are not being encouraged to do anything better, because if they pick up the paper everyday and they see that they are being mentioned, they are being talked about on the radio everyday it does not encourage them to stop. What we need to do to get to these kids is to get these kids and talk to them like they are people - talk to them like they are human beings and I think you might find that will help a hell of a lot more than making a load of publicity out of nothing. They are only just people like everybody else; so I don't see why all this fuss is being made about the Rastafarians at all.

An example of Press distortion: this article appeared in 'The Sunday Telegraph' (4/12/77) following the 'Shades of Grey' report. It attributed ALL crime in Handsworth to a group of young blacks, and claimed the area had a high rate of crime, a view not supported by police statistics. 'The Guardian', 'Daily Mail', and 'Times' as well as local papers printed the same factually inaccurate story.

Mrs. Y:

WHAT I really detest is this mugging whether it is true or not - each time you hear on the radio it is West Indian. They mug the white people and they can't say it is a lie because they mug the coloured just as much, and I think it is very bad. I think some of the white youths dress like black and do things for them to say it is black people, and everything is West Indian, but there is the Africans and there is the Indians, but they all call them West Indian and especially Jamaicans get the blame and that has been going on a long time. Well, I am here 20 odd years, you will always hear Jamaicans whether you are black, white, pink or blue if you look like a Jamaican you are just a Jamaican. I wish they could come together 'cause you have to live. You have the half-caste and you wouldn't call the half-caste West Indian 'cause they are English too. Well, you got a lot of half-caste who cause trouble but they don't bother with them.

Family Support

Mr. A put strongly the point that parents should support their kids more and Mrs. J, in the rest of her interview, also makes this point:

I AM the mother of two boys and a girl, and I come in this country and I work and I try my best to bring up my kids to the best of my ability. Now I have to give into my kids 50-50, I don't expect my kids to live the same kind of life I live, because things have changed and times have changed. And I think parents in this country need to realise this, they need to realise that their kids need their support all along the way, all along the line. The kids like to know that their parents are there when they need them.

When i say support your kids I do not mean uphold your kids when they are doing wrong, because wrong is wrong and right is right. Too many parents give up on their kids too easily. i think this is where all the destruction is. All right the media says that black youths are doing the mugging in

Handsworth now if you meet half of those black youths who are doing the mugging you will find that half of them hasn't seen their parents for quite a while if you go into their background you will find that the parents are not there somewhere along the line. No matter what your child is trying to do, it is up to you to keep on telling them that it is wrong or it is right, if you give up on your child then straight away he is going to think that nobody cares, so I might as well do what I please.

The young youths in this country need a chance to breath, they need a chance to live, they need a chance to survive like everybody else. Without that chance there is no way anybody is going to get them to change. All I can say is parents shouldn't give up on their kids so easily. Support them they need your support in every way, and the press and the police would just stop niggling at every little issue that happens, 'cause it is not only black youths that are doing this. And they say it is West Indians, but if you look you will find that they were born in England and are English kids, most of the kids that are doing the mugging are born in this country, I wish, they would put that in the back of their minds when they are talking about all these muggings.

Mrs J said that she thought that it was likely that many black kids involved in 'mugging' were estranged from their parents. It is interesting, therefore, that Mrs. Y in the remainder of her interview indicates that she takes a hard line with her son and has threatened to throw him out of home. She obviously feels that young blacks should change their habits and, for example, stop congregating in groups in order to prevent the police troubling them.

WELL, I don't think that it is just to do with the police, the boys or the parents, because some parents try their best but the children have different ideas. Some are on the streets. Police might say something to them, and that's it. Well, where parents and kids are concerned a lot of people try to bring up their kids the right way, but the way you think is not the way your kids think. If the policeman is right they say police don't like us, so they say the wrong thing and it becomes a free-for-all. I personally tell my son if it is possible don't walk in a group, because one night they was coming from Stoney Lane and the policeman ask them where them was coming from and one of them answer, and just like that them pick up the boy. Another night the boy from over the road, was talking about police, so I said all the while you are on about policeman, sometimes if you know how to talk to a police you wouldn't get into trouble. He said he doesn't like them and if a policeman trouble him he has to fight back. So I say to him it wouldn't help. Another thing, when they are on the street like the non-workers, and when they are backward and forward on the streets, I was coming from work one day and there was a lot of them sitting on the wall, and I said to my son don't you sit on that wall 'cause that is the way police gets to know, so I went back to him and I said to him listen if you don't come in now you can come fi your clothes. I said that because I think that if you are known to policemen you get involved and even if you are right, you are wrong. I know you got to walk late but if is two or three of you, but in a crowd it isn't any good, because policeman might say to you where are you coming from? One night they were coming with this sound, and the policeman stop them, my son said to me this policeman stop them this night, so I said what did you say? He said he went and played out, they said they wanted to know the name of the sound so he told them, so the policeman say the reason why he stopped them is because someone just pinched a van with instruments from somewhere.

Some people would say, well, the Government should do something about it but the Government can't do anything about it really. They have to catch them and convict them before you can do anything. I think they should have a centre for them, find something for them to do. It should be compulsory, 'cause if they are going to work and don't get pay, only the dole money, they would do be doing something for the community. I don't think all is bad. With the Rasta's now I haven't got anything against them but I don't think they have a real cause fighting for. Well, if they have got it I don't know it, like the locks, I think it discriminate them because as they see you with the locks they say 'oh, he is a Rasta', 'cause from the time you got it you got to be bad, and I personally know all of them isn't bad. Well, if a man wants to locks his hair you can't tell him: "Don't locks", but if they was fighting for a cause I would be with them.

Church Influence

It is obvious that there is a greater divergence of opinion amongst the parents interviewed than amongst either the kids themselves or the churchmen. Some observers have noted that older black people seem anxious to make their behaviour as much like the host community as possible. There is increasing evidence that young blacks are not prepared to do this, and that they wish to assert their own identity. An overwhelming majority of the religious leaders interviewed, both black and white, recognise this and are of the view that, as long as it doesn't cause real discomfort to anyone, young blacks should be encouraged to retain their own identity. Further, the religious leaders feel that the police should learn about black culture and take account of it in their relations with young blacks.

Mrs. Y's opinion that it is the young blacks who should change their behaviour highlights, therefore, the divergence of opinion amongst black parents about the conflict between the police and their children.

The remainder of the parents interviewed are members of the Tenasicod Order of the Morning Star, a strict Pentecostal Church (see introduction to the section on The Church) and are generally of the opinion, like Mrs. Y, that it is the black kids who have to change. However, the first parent, Mrs. R, is more critical of the police than the others.

MY PERSONAL view about the police is that although they are doing a great deal of work in the community to maintain law and order amongst everybody, some of the events that I have witnessed make me feel that they are not fair to a part of the community, especially the youths that come from the Commonwealth. We know that it is not an easy job for the police to keep the peace, but all the same, they should try to look into things in a human way, and try to bring peace. I personally think that they ought to have powers whereby they can settle a dispute on the spot instead of allowing it to drag on, whereby the escalation of violences goes on and on and nobody really has the power to check it. I am not blaming the police personally. They have their job to do and they should do it without fear. There are instances where they are intimidated and they fear that the group of hooligans with whom they are in conflict, may take revenge, so when cases come to them they try to judge the issue, and that is not good enough. They must keep peace, they must be impartial. Whoever is concerned they must try to do that which is justice.

Mrs. T echoes those who say the kids need support but goes on to make it clear that she feels that it is the kids' own fault and suggests that the police should forcibly cut the hair of Rastas.

I THINK that great care should be taken in these young youths because they need protection and they need help, and they need care. I myself doesn't like when I am walking on the streets to meet up people with their hair looking that shabby, looking so funny, looking so peculiar from other people, and if there could be some force being taken in this situation like the police could get them to have their hair cut, because it is really bad for people to bring themselves down to this situation. It makes you feel down-hearted when you see human beings carrying themselves like that, like they are hooligans that live in the forest. Most of what is going on I think is the youth who really create it themselves because they follow each other.

Mrs. L recognises that the police approach youths purely because of their colour and she suggests repatriation as a solution.

A POLICEMAN should be a peace officer. We are aware of the facts of their duty and that they should understand and be concerned. We know they have a great task, but when they approach a youth specifically for their pigmentation, I wonder what really goes on in the mind of such a person. Because, as you know, people vary in their thoughts and actions and in other ways, so when a policeman speaks to a coloured youth, it all depends on his psychological approach, the way that he speaks and the way he acts. Because, as you know, there are the ones that say law and peace, but do not keep the peace. I would say the situation needs the interest of the Government, and the care, and if it is necessary, they should introduce repatriation to any country. It should be set up by the Government and the people would know they were protected wherever they are going. But at the moment it needs a body to make necessary enquiries into these difficulties.

Mrs. P has several children and her opinion is that many young blacks have hatred in them and that the main thing is for everybody to love.

I HAVE quite a few kids and I think that the parents are a lot to do with it. I think some parents foster hatred in the children. They grow up and see the parents hating. They say, "Oh, I hate this one and I hate that one because they're white" or because they are from somewhere else, things like that. And you can't blame the police altogether, because they have got a very, very tough job on their hands. I know that some of them are a bit prejudiced, yet still I think that it works both ways. I think if the kids are guided right, if they grow up and follow the parents, and if you teach the kids to love instead of hate. Somebody might do you something wrong, but you shouldn't go and seek revenge. I think that a very high percentage of black people in this country have got hatred in them, some of them are taught hatred, some of them are taught other things, and some of them are not being taught at all. The word that I want to stress is the complex. You get the ones with an inferiority complex. There is a complex between the two, between the coloured population in this country and the police. I think if we can get rid of that complex, we can mix together more, then we can teach our children now that the most important thing is to just love, and that is the all important thing, to love and not to hate. I think you will find that it will be very easy if we all love. Even if we disagree on certain issues, if we compromise, I think we will make a good step towards good relationships that we are trying to bring about.



Section Three - The Church

THIS section contains six interviews with churchmen who are all actively involved with black youth through their churches. They range from an Anglican and a Methodist through to representatives of the Pentecostal churches.

The majority of the black-led churches in Britain today are of the "pentecostal" variety. The term "pentecost" was first given to the Jewish Feast of Weeks, which fell on the 50th day after the Passover, when the first-fruits of the corn harvest were presented (Deuteronomy 16 : 9) and, in most later times, the giving of the Law of Moses was commemorated.

As the Holy Spirit was believed to have descended on the 50th day after the Resurrection (Acts 2 : 1), the name was applied by the Church to the feast celebrating this event.

The Pentecostal Movement originated among believers who sought a baptism in the Holy Spirit accompanied by speaking with tongues similar to instances recorded in Acts. Pentecostal Churches, therefore, have always been ecstatic and this has had considerable attraction for the black community.

Perhaps more important, however, is the social and political content of the black churches in our society, whereby the ecstatic and fundamentalist theology has enabled not only a thriving and strong concept of theological liberation and salvation, but has also sustained cultural liberation and identity.

They also have a positive identification as the "suffering church" which establishes itself around the dispossessed and dehumanised members of society; their strength in the Handsworth area of Birmingham, where black attendance is in the region of 25 per cent of the community, must be viewed within this context. As Roswith Gerloff has put it: "The Black Churches in America, the West Indies and Africa - as is now also true for the black-led churches in Britain - have long been places for spiritual, cultural, social, in many cases even political survival... they were the source of resistance and the training ground for black leadership, self-expression and self-determination".*

The black-led Pentecostal Churches, therefore, have had a long-established mandate to articulate the views and feelings of the black community, particularly in a situation of oppression. This is not least because of the nature of the Gospel itself which proclaims a liberation in Christ from the powers of this world including its oppressive structures and institutions. The voice of the black church is still the voice of the majority of the black community, although the alienation experienced and expressed by black youth who seek more radical expressions of their cultural identity must be noted.

It is perhaps not without significance that many young blacks are looking towards Rastafarianism for their liberation, theological and other, rather than the churches of their parents.



John Wilkinson is the priest in charge of St. James Church, Aston. It is an Anglican Church with a predominantly black congregation but with two white clergy at present. This interview gave a very detailed analysis of the problem by a white person closely involved with the black community.

I THINK the first thing I am going to say will be just a little bit about the situation as I see it. The first thing to say is that it's more complicated than it is usually presented. There isn't just the police and black youth - as if every member thinks absolutely alike. I am often struck at the very wide extremes of behaviour and possibilities for lives that are found among young black people. Some have a home background infinitely more strict than anything that I have ever seen in my life, and the next person, the same age, has a freedom which I think is quite as wrong and quite inappropriate to a person of those ages. For instance, I can think of one 17-year-old girl who is a member of our congregation but it is very hard for her to get permission to go out at all to anything where there might be boys around. I often try to persuade the mother to let her go out and never succeed. At the other extreme I know of girls of the same age or even younger who are out till two, three, four o'clock in the morning without proper care and protection. These are great extremes. And I think in a way those extremes are reflected in attitudes to the police. I know of youngsters picked up off the streets apparently arbitrarily - certainly not having committed any offence, people under suspicion more because they are black than for any other reason. On the other hand, I feel that's not the whole story. One of the strongest pressures on me as a priest is the sort of pressure from parents of our young people who would look to us to save their children from the Rastafarians. Now I don't know if anyone has put it in quite those words but that's the feeling I get. Among our parents there is a strong suspicion and dislike and fear of all that Rastafarians stand for. When I say 'What Rastafarians stand for' I am not thinking of the details of their religious or political or racial beliefs or whatever. I am thinking of the type of dress and the way would-be Rastafarians present themselves on the streets - which may, of course, be quite different from a true believer. So, among our young people you would find some who have a great resentment and grudge against the police who would feel, perhaps without being able to articulate it, that the police are the symbol, the power of white society and are out to do them

down. But at the other end of the scale we've, perhaps more typically, in our congregation young people who have done well at school who if, they are aware of racialism it still only appears to me to be in the background of their lives. It may hit hard on occasions, it may have been unpleasant in particular instances but it isn't the dominating influence. I think of one girl who I hope that you may be able to speak to, who told me that when we were discussing racialism in a Christian study group, that the biggest, most unpleasant influence of her life, the thing that she would like steer clear of at all cost, were the Rastas. If you say 'Who do you mean by that?' she means kids in school who try to make her life unpleasant who mock her for how she dresses, who mock her style of hair, or for playing musical instruments well and for having white friends. She finds that a sort of persecution, and put like that I can't but sympathise with her in rejecting those pressures. Between the two there are all stages depending partly on the experience and attitude of individuals concerned. I think I would like to say a bit about how I see our role as a church. We've got, in a way, a unique opportunity, we are obviously in Britain a majority white denomination, and heavily white-led to say the least. Though of course this is not true abroad and there have been occasions when we have had black clergy from the West Indies, from Africa including an African Bishop. But for the most part we are a black congregation in a white church, and I think therefore we attract the kind of young people who, relatively speaking, feel most at home in Britain and feel settled and doing well at school. We would try to hold centre ground in a kind of increasing racial polarisation. I have no sympathy with the polarisation on the white side, though it's obviously there. I do have more sympathy and understanding with polarisation on the black side and in so far as I meet it I am often prepared to go along with it quite a long way. Though I certainly have a cut-off point where I would feel it getting into an area that I would want to keep our young people away from. The polarisations happen. Maybe though there is a point in trying to preserve a centre ground, partly in preparation for better times, but partly because I feel that black, young people or black people are going to have to, in the end, participate in majority society. There is no future in the long term in a deliberate retreat into a ghetto, even though that may have its point in the short term. Now I think the type of young people we get are those who are most able to hold a centre ground and to participate in white society. So that relates to the police in this way, that I would want them to have an appreciation of what policemen are like, that they vary, the huge variety of pressures put on them, what it means to be young and perhaps not very well trained, what it means to be afraid of being attacked, of being a policeman who tries to arrest someone and then find himself surrounded by 15 or 20 of his friends who are not concerned in whether he has done right or wrong, they are only concerned in rescuing him. I know police who have had that experience and I know I would respect, and a lot of people would appreciate, that they are still open and broad-minded enough and, I hope I could say Christian enough, to be able to be sensitive to how it feels inside the other skin. Anyway that's the type of awareness I would want to develop within them. Now it's equally important to try to develop the same sensitivity and awareness from the police side. How do you do this? Certainly I would want to require it of the police as part of their professionalism. There's no obligation on the part of the public in one sense to understand what it is like to be a policeman. They don't get paid for doing that and that goes for the highest members of the public black or white. But there is great obligation on the part of the police to be able to feel what it's like to be on the other side, because that's part of their professionalism. That is what they are paid for. Now I see from them very sad instances of lack of sensitivity and closed minds. I remember for instance in talking to a policeman who said when he met an Irish man he would joke about him being Irish; when he met a Scotsman he would say all

sorts of names, that everyone knows jokes about Scotsmen, and so he didn't see why he couldn't use similar sort of terminology in regard to black people. And no amount of explaining to him how people feel about slavery and so on, could convince him to change his opinion. Now if a man thinks that he can use words like that and that they are a joke, and he gets away with it, he really has got something to learn. Now it's that kind of innocence, that closed-mindedness which I think might characterise quite a number of police. They haven't made that leap of imagination and they don't understand the history, that there is a culture for black people and how their way of life has developed. Indeed how the West Indians came to England in the first place. I don't find it easy, just like that to make concrete recommendations, because I don't know enough about how the police force operate. But I think there should be two things. One would be to try to develop some context whereby people who matter in the police force - say people who matter in the police force in a black area like Handsworth - and people who matter on the more militant ring of black consciousness, could get together with the assistance of a skilled chairman who is trusted by both sides, who could help one side to speak to the other. Not to reason things out in arguments because I don't think the problem is existing at that level, but to try and understand what makes the other side tick and why they react as they do. I don't think that is an easy thing but I think if there was a will, I think one has to say in the first place, if there was the will on the police side, the people who have got the skills to enable the two sides to communicate do exist and they could be found. And I hope there could be that kind of communication. Because where things always seem to go wrong to me is the feeling, the emotions, the gut level that the other side doesn't experience. The suggestion I would like to make might be some form of monitoring what the policeman walking around on the beat encounters and what he does. It is important to know what he encounters again because it might make him very much afraid, therefore liable to panic or hit back hard. But at the same time we would also want to monitor what he does and whether he is automatically suspicious of certain types of dress or even just black skin. I am at a bit of a disadvantage because I don't know exactly what training in this field is now given to young policemen, but I do feel strongly that anyone who is going to work in a multi-racial area has got to understand the culture of black people or of Asian people. I have myself worked two years in the West Indies and that's perhaps the best preparation for my present job that I had. A white person becoming a policeman knows from his upbringing all the subtleties of white life. He knows how to interpret accents, he knows what criminal behaviour is, he knows patterns of family background, he keeps the class structure in his mind, all kinds of little detailed awareness about how people behave. It has been part of his upbringing from the day he was born. You have got to learn those kind of subtleties among black people, if only to realise how immensely different opinions are. And on the issue of facing one solid mass, either of opposition or whatever, he has got to learn to find his way around and where the strong points are, and what makes people behave in certain ways, how difficult it is to get jobs for your people. All these kinds of things as well as the cultural background - how many ways it is similar to his own and how in some ways it is utterly different. You have got to understand patois as well to some extent, and how certain words which sound the same in English and West Indian dialect in fact mean slightly different things - all that kind of thing. I think the old sort of traditional belief of British people, that they have the best police force in the world - I don't want to sound naive but I think that there is a lot that is good, very good in the tradition of most regularly in my work and in our congregation - most of them would still have a great appreciation of that. For instance people who have gone home to Jamaica and seen how the police behave there, compare what happens in Britain quite

favourable. But if there is this good within the British tradition it can only be maintained by rigorous, constructive criticism. The police have got to be open to informed criticism and I feel it is not always very well received. It follows that in a situation where things appear to be rapidly deteriorating it's necessary for the police to make an initiative, to make a huge effort for understanding and to try to rectify things. If a great confrontation develops it benefits nobody, certainly not the police, not the country at large, and not black people either. If there was a real trial of strength it must be quite clear that they could not win. But for everybody's good I feel the initiative must come from the professional side in ways that I have tried to outline.

Rev. Joe Stevens is the minister of Moseley Road Methodist Church and has been working in the Balsall Heath area of Birmingham for seven years. Like John Wilkinson, he stressed the need for a greater understanding of West Indian culture.

IT SEEMS to me that the situation is deteriorating in our area, on account of the misunderstanding of the exuberance of some of our young black people by the police, who have the responsibility, and I recognise this, of keeping the peace. The first point I want to make is that I feel far too many of our young are being provoked into anti-police behaviour, because they find themselves either stopped and questioned when there isn't really any need for them to be stopped at all. Behaviour which is undoubtedly noisy or excitable doesn't seem to me to be harmful, and it's only when the police set out to question them or move them, and this happens repeatedly, that they get the kind of response which then causes them to take them in for arrest.

The second point I would like to make is that I consider that when our young people are arrested, they should be given the opportunity to have someone with them at the police station before they make any statements at all. Several occasions have occurred when our young people have been asked to sign statements about what had happened, without having any chance to consult either a legal adviser or any adult whom they know, and they have not been given the opportunity to look over the statement properly. It seems to me that these young people should be given a chance for their own sake.

I also feel the young people are urged by the police to plead guilty so that they can be easily convicted, when the youngsters are not convinced that they are guilty of anything and that they won't be found guilty in court. This causes a feeling of resentment when it happens. They feel they haven't had fair play. This has happened on several occasions in my experience, and in one case a boy was forced to plead guilty to something he felt that he had not done in order to save his girlfriend from being included in the charge. The police decided that they would let her off if he would plead guilty.

Speaking as one who came into this situation with no experience of West Indian culture at all, I find it took me a long time to appreciate the background of the young West Indian people in this area, and it seems to me that in any kind of training that the police receive, there is a great need for them to have lectures on West Indian culture, and in particular, the culture of the West Indians born in this country whose parents came from the Caribbean.

I also think that there would be great value in the police being given the opportunity to mix on social occasions with the young people in their own youth clubs, so that the young people have the same confidence in the police that the white population had previously. I am certain that the

West Indian youngsters are as law-abiding as any other youngsters. All we are asking for is that he should be given the same tolerance and the same justice that a white youngster would get in the same circumstances. When they do wrong we tell them they do wrong and we don't expect them to be in trouble for things they haven't done or for things that are trivial anyway.

Rev. Ermal Kirby is a field-worker with an inter-church youth project in the Handsworth area. He works primarily with young people in the black-led churches - the Holiness and Pentecostal churches. The project was set up in the belief that through these churches at least half, and possibly more, of the young people in areas such as Handsworth could be contacted. Rev. Kirby again advocates the need for the police to understand West Indian culture.

AS FAR as the relationship with the police is concerned, I think that we have found there are policemen, senior policemen in particular, who are very willing to recognise the differences between communities, who are willing to be fair and to make sure that justice is done. But I think also that there is definite evidence coming to us that there are policemen who are, shall we say, over-eager, over-zealous, in carrying out their duties, so that they will pick on black youths for things which we would consider absolutely trivial. One of the main ones is that it seems you cannot be seen talking to your friends for more than five minutes before a policeman is going to come along and tell you to move on, regardless of what sort of person you are, or regardless of what you are saying.

We have had at least three incidents like this where people said they had just met someone whom they hadn't seen for some time, they were chatting and laughing together which is very much the West Indian way, and within a matter of minutes, policemen come along and just tell them to break it up and get on. I think that this sort of incident causes unnecessary tension. They were not threatening the public in any way, they were not a nuisance, they were just enjoying themselves, perhaps not as quietly as the host population would have liked. The police are within their rights to say "move on", but I think they could have been more lenient and, in fact, are not as lenient as they could be.

What I think is that, by and large, the information and the attitude that does characterise the higher ranks of inspector and so on, this does not seem to be filtering down to the bobby on the beat. He, in his little corner, he is just content to go on being as intolerant as he wants to be. So somehow we have got to bridge this gap, and say it is not enough just to have police liaison officers who are good public relations men, but their message and their attitudes have got to characterise the whole police force. Now, how that is going to happen, I am not entirely sure, because it is going to take each policeman individually saying to himself: "I am not going to discriminate, I am not going to pick on these people, but I am going to be tolerant". And, for that to happen I think there has to be a radical change in the population at large. I think policemen are to some extent reflecting the attitudes and the feelings of the population, therefore they feel that they are being backed by society when they pick on blacks and that is what encourages them to go on picking on blacks. So, it's not the police. We see it in relation to the problem of English society in general, and what is English society's attitude to the blacks? Is it one of acceptance or is it one of toleration? Or, is it one of menacing, you are here on sufferance? Improvements in relationships with the police can only come first by recognition that there is a problem - and I think that this is one of the values of this survey, that it is getting data, concrete facts on which to

work. Once it has been seen that there is a problem, and that policemen are not being as helpful as they are supposed to be, then I think we are in the position to talk about solutions. Solutions such as police recognising that young blacks are not just Englishmen who aren't towing the line, that they do have a distinctive culture of their own, that they do have a history.

They are the product of a certain process, and that process is different from what has made the Englishman what he is. The police must realise this and appreciate it and not try to say that all people, not just blacks, as opposed to whites, but the Indians and all the other ethnic minorities, all these people have their own place in society and should be allowed to live lives that are acceptable to them, lives that suit them, provided that this is not infringing any major law of society. I think other solutions or desirable goals would be to see that on the black side the police are not being seen as totally opposed to blacks but as people with a genuine concern. We must give them the benefit of the doubt. Sometimes they are really eager to stamp out lawlessness, and because they go about it in the wrong way, does not mean that their desire is not a good one. On the black side there must be recognition that even though there are policemen who are abusing their privileges or being over-zealous, there are also those who are quite conscientious, and we should be trying to help them for the benefit of the whole society.

The Rev. Corbett is director of the inter-church youth project in Handsworth of which Rev. Kirby is the field worker. He reports that he has received many complaints of police harassment from Christian boys and girls and he gives as an example an incident he witnessed. He does say, though, that a balanced view is needed as he believes that some youngsters do provoke the police. He suggests some solutions that would alleviate the situation.

FIRST OF ALL, let me clear this one point that unlike many of the groups, the church is not a pressure group, yet at the same time, we are not alienated from the problems that are in society, because as politics is people, the church is involved with people. We cannot at any time condone any form of brutality or harassment by the police of the blacks. At the same time the church would not condone harassment of the blacks to the police. One of the things that we have got to face is this, there are very few mature policemen any longer on the beat, the panda car and the good motor cycle and all of these are attracting the youths, and the man who came up the hard way is no longer liaising between the blacks and the whites. What I would like to see happen is that the various organisations, voluntary and otherwise, that are set up, keep a balanced view in what they are approaching, so as not to give a one-sided picture of the problems that are facing us.

We have had many complaints of good Christian lads and people who have been harassed by the police. Sometimes they just come from a prayer meeting and because it is late, they might be stopped and challenged, or someone going from work or to work and they've been stopped and challenged. I had a case just the other day where I saw a young policeman on the Soho Road stop a youth of 13 or 14 because he had a little bit of stick in his hand and he gave him a good dressing down for carrying a piece of stick. I picked up the lad in my car because he was trembling to death, and I brought him to our office and calmed him down and gave him a knowledge of his rights as far as the law is concerned. At the same time I have also seen cases where young blacks seem deliberately to provoke situations.

Whilst I was visiting America, something struck me very forcibly, especially around the Washington DC area, where there was a group of policemen specially trained, not so much in the laws of arrest, whilst they had the same powers, but they had a role in community relations. They do not only stay in their office and somebody phones them and says we have got a problem, but they were on the beat, looking for where even the actual policeman is harassing the other fellow, or they go into the schools and different institutions and try to sell the image of the truth of the policeman. This I understand this has made a great impact in Washington. I don't know if that could be applicable here.

I would like to see those who are running voluntary projects have individuals who would take time off to study the law and police tactics, and become kind of a liaison between both communities, someone that can be turned to. I mean if the police think that they are having a raw deal they should be able to turn to someone of the black leaders, and say well listen, so and so is happening, just the same way as we can turn to the white leaders.

So I do not think that we have got any ready made solution to the problem. Save that I would ask, as a minister of religion, that both sides keep a balanced view and do not tip the balance one way or the other, but to recognise that there is the young enthusiastic policeman that is going to go all out of his way and is going to give a rough time to the youth, who may not be able to defend himself. And then there is also the group of youths, who, knowing that they are going to be tackled at some time, do provoke situations. We must keep balance where the law is concerned, and educate our youths to realise that the policeman is not always their enemy, that not all the policemen are their enemy, but that they are there to uphold the law. I want to finish up by saying something that I mentioned to my colleagues this morning about what the new police commissioner said. He said he would be stepping out very forcibly to discipline any young policeman who is proven to be harassing blacks, and also that they are going to go all out of their way to try and see if they can encourage young blacks to take their place in the police force in growing multi-racial society.

Let me also cite just in closing one thing, that I think it is very essential to both sides of the community that a panel should be set up with both blacks and whites, to investigate the complaints that are made against the police. At the moment it is a one-sided affair, because if a complaint goes against the police it only goes to the police department and they are the ones, all whites, that investigate it. But, if a panel is set up on both sides, so that at least you get an amount of blacks and an amount of whites to investigate these complaints, one might get a more true picture and know definitely that justice will be done on both sides.

Pastor Blissett is a priest of the Bethel Church of God Fellowship based at Villa Road Methodist Church. He starts by making it clear that he feels it is up to the black youngsters to modify their behaviour and appearance in order to forestall any police attention and says that he doesn't believe that the police as a whole are picking on blacks. But he goes on to say that there will be trouble unless something is done and he echoes the feelings of the other churchmen who say that West Indian culture is different, and that the police should be educated to appreciate and understand it.

THE YOUTHS first of all have got to be in a position to allow the police to look upon them as decent citizens of the city and the country. In that I mean people should really take account of you

and of the way you go on and the way you carry yourself and if you carry yourself and conduct yourself on the streets as you ought, then you will command respect because according to the word of God, Solomon said: "Show me your company and I will tell you who you are". If your company is the type that the police really have cause to keep their eyes on, and if one is seen in this company and although you may not be of the same type or in the same category, therefore the police are going to pick on you also. Therefore, it is up to the youth of the city or of the country to conduct themselves and pick and choose their company, lift their heads high and once you lift your head high, then you will be able to command respect.

I do not believe for a moment that the police are really aiming at picking on the youth, or may I say on people as West Indians. I said that to say that if the youths will appreciate that the law is something that they have got to respect and that the police has got a job to do then once you show your respect to the police you will command their respect.

For instance, if the youth dress themselves as they ought to dress themselves, walk as they ought to walk, speak on the streets as they ought to speak, in that I mean do not lift their voices, speak mannerly, conduct their conversation in a decent way, then they will be looked upon as decent citizens, but if they are going about the streets in groups, shouting, and things like that then they just ask for the police to look down upon them.

Now may I say this, that the police are not angels, the police are men just like any other men and in my opinion there are police that are in the force who are not different from the teddy boys on the street. The only difference is that they don't dress themselves in the same manner. You will find out the police carry long hair, just like the Rastafarian on the street, only they don't twist theirs. I can see the difference between them and the Rastafarians on the streets only in that they conduct themselves in a better manner.

I want to say that the youths in Birmingham are like a time bomb, and they are ticking away, and sooner or later there is going to be an explosion. I hope to God that the eyes of the Government could be opened to this fact, and make haste and do something about it.

They leave school, and it seems to me as though they are not wanted, quite often, my own children, a job was advertised, they were first at the spot and as soon as they got there they were told that the job is gone. I mean, these things aren't good enough. They were born here and they have a right to live as anybody else, they have a life to live as anybody else, they need to be fed like anybody else, they need clothes like anybody else, they need to be housed like anybody else. And if things go on as it is going, I can see a tragic end to it, and I saying this categorically, the Government is going to be very, very, very sorry, and, as it were, find their backs against the wall.

I would recommend strongly and I mean strongly that the Government does something to educate the police as far as our West Indian youths are concerned. Their culture is different to that of the English culture, they are living in the same environment, in the same atmosphere, but the culture is different and I hope to God that the Government would do something to have the police, especially the young police, trained in dealing with the youths that are now coming up in this country, so that they may know how to meet them, how to speak to them, how to act when they meet them, there are those times when they are really out of order, but if the police are trained

then they will know exactly how to take them, and you know it is said that a soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger. And quite often it is because of the grievous words of the police cause the youths to explode.

Joshua Okikiade is a Minister of the Tenasicod Order of the Morning Star Church. He feels that there should be more liaison between official bodies and the youths to build understanding. And, though he believes that the police should be firm, he also believes that they should be fair and not pick up kids indiscriminately.

WE HAVE to understand the ways of our youths of today, what makes them tick, the realism behind their action, and I think the psychiatrists should come together, and the CRC people, to study the actions and behaviour of these youths and come up with a formula whereby the social workers could use it to make them better citizens. Repatriation will not solve the problem, neither will putting them in remand homes. Understand and talking to them, keep talking and they become a community link and it can't be broken. I think that will improve the situation. The police need to be far more firm in their actions, and let justice be seen to be done, but that does not mean that they should just hold on to the first person and drag him in a car without listening to what we have to say.

* "Partnership in Black and White" by Roswith Gerloff and printed in Christian Action Journal, "Race Relations in Britain", 50p from 15 Blackfriars Lane, London EC4.

**First Published in 1978 by AFFOR, 173 Lozells Road, Lozells, Birmingham B19 1RN.
Reprinted 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982.**

Edited by Derek Bishton and Brian Homer. Patois edited by Phil Nanton. Additional material by Danzie Stewart. Interviews compiled by Carlton Green. Transcribed by Marcia Stewart and Cina Corcoran. Photos by John Reardon, Derek Bishton and Brian Homer.

