

# What are we going to do

By Lawrence A. Jardine

March 2, 2012

**T**he last four weeks have been a very uncomfortable period for me, since one of my dogs died. I actually cried. I loved that dog, and had so many plans to spend more time with her. When my first daughter was born and she smiled at me, I coined the phrase, "As genuine as a baby's smile." There is none more sincere than a baby's smile; there is no flattery or deceit at the back of it, you can always take it at face value. There is no sincerer greeting than that of a loving dog. But they cannot compete with the showering and protective love of a loyal and devoted mother. This brings me to the core of my discomfort.

When I heard of the killing of Dorothy Prince, the 39-year old female petrol service station attendant working a pre-graveyard shift, in a most blatant disregard for a woman's life, I mourned not just for her, but for Antigua and Barbuda. I think that gruesome act killed a bit of Antigua and Barbuda, forever. Let us wrap our minds around and digest this, if possible: two of the alleged were male peace enforcement officers – a policeman and a soldier; they were trained to use firearms; they made vows and promises to "serve and protect" the citizenry; they are involved in the shooting and killing of a woman in "cold blood"; they shot her three times at close range; they organized the crime; at least one socializes on the social networking service, Facebook. The criminality is complete as it showcases all the odious ingredients, contradictions and transgressions of a "tiny" society in which we call our women "bitches".

I wrote something in 2006, which was - from within my heart - an attempt to make a comment on a profoundly disturbing social trend. The piece won an Independence writing competition, but I cannot recall one person who complimented me for social observation, it was all about its poetry.

Please have a second read, maybe in the wake of Prince's slaughter some sunlight may be shed on it. It is entitled *Moonlight*.

*As a young woman, I had kept many a tryst under the romantic and seductive moonlight. I can vividly recall while looking into the firmament, pulsating moments of ecstasy when my nerve endings were virgin, and my innocence was pristine. I can enumerate many regrets too – plagues to my inner being, the victim and prisoner of my unfailing memories. Expectantly, I conceived my first child and daughter at a tender age under the moonlight to an older man, or perhaps a beast of prey that abandoned me three moons afterwards. I remember - that bright and orgasmic, then sad and tearful night when I informed him, after he had lightened his load, of my missing companion - how he "moon-walked" out of my life with consummate ease. Since then my life has been eclipsed by the traumatic umbra of moonlights.*

*For me, it is painfully ironic that in my psyche, moonlight has become nightmare - the antecedent of my ever-trembling moonquake when I work at nights. Naturally – not for the want of a better adverb, I am a single parent - akin my beaten mother who had left us unattended for too many moonlights. Like mom too, I am employed in the hospitality industry - but how inhospitable*

*that industry had been to us - her five children. Inherently too, since that day when my first child attended school at the late age of seven, I have been labouring two jobs – moonlighting – and even now my stranded ends have illusively not yet met. Circular is the moon and circular are our woes, as we experience perennial difficulty of making light our ghostly burdens... My third child – another girl has just climbed five, and I have renewed with passionate vigour my vow to screen and shade her from stargazing on her back - and the blisters of conspiring moonlights working in tandem.*

Now night jobs have literally become graveyard shifts for our women. Here we have a mother working at nights, doing a 'man's hours' to make ends meet, to feed and care her children, to be gunned down by sons of the state who vowed and promised to 'serve and protect' her. That act is as horrendous as it can ever be. But I am not done yet. Just look at the trend over the past few years on our women: they are being beaten, raped and now murdered by 'sons' who swore by oath to 'serve and protect.' And just imagine, these asocial and anti-social sons and peace enforcement officers socialize using BB, Twitter and Facebook, in this age of social networking!

### **What are we going to do?**

We need to change the psyche of males in our 'tiny' Antigua and Barbuda towards women. In light of this I wrote a piece (I believe I chose the words carefully), which is easy to memorize, that I am proposing to be recited in all social gatherings and institutions, *from primary school to church to parliament*, at least once daily by all males – until we internalize the passion and commitment to 'love and protect' our women, and behave accordingly.

#### **The Man's Creed**

**In respect of my mother:**

**I promise not to mistreat women at all;**

**I promise to love and protect women,**

**From all danger and harm, as long as I live.**

No amount of electronic security and 'armed guards' will stop unloving and indifferent men from beating, raping and killing vulnerable women. We must attempt to do something else; re-programme the man's mind...

Lawrence A. Jardine

P. O. Box W600, Nelson Mandela Drive, Upper Gambles, St. John's, Antigua  
Tel: (268) 770-6955 Email: [jardinea@candw.ag](mailto:jardinea@candw.ag)

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Dear Custodian:

Greetings...

The killing of Dorothy Prince, the female petrol service station attendant, by alleged male peace enforcement officers, a policeman and a soldier, has spurred me to participatory action. The possibility that male peace enforcement officers, who have vowed to "serve and protect" the citizenry, could "gang-up" to execute such an act is hitherto unimaginable in this small society. Can it get worse than that? The question then is: **What are we going to do?**

My participatory action to alleviate such crimes is premised on the proverbial axiom: **"Prevention is better than cure."**

It is my considered opinion that we need to change, from an early age, the way males perceive and treat women. In light of this, I am proposing that boys, facing the girls in mixed schools, recite the following daily.

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No amount of electronic security and 'armed guards' will stop unloving and indifferent men from beating, raping and killing vulnerable women. We must attempt to do something else; re-programme the man's mind...

Respectfully,

Lawrence A. Jardine