

Excerpt from *Making and Unmaking the Young ‘Shotta’ [Shooter]: Boundaries and (Counter)-Actions in the ‘Garrisons’, IDS Working Paper 297*

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Everyday forms of violence in Jamaica Interviews among 6–9-year-old children

Six-year-old girl:

Miss, my mother and my father died (sobbing). My mother dead by gunshots [Gunshots killed her]. (Children in Jamaica commonly address women as Miss and men as Sir.)

When did it happen?

From I was two years old, Miss, and me [I] don't know her.

How did your father die?

I don't know; they don't tell me about him.

Who do you live with?

I live with my grandmother and my uncle and aunts, all in one yard. (A yard is a shared compound, which houses a number of families.)

How do they manage?

They don't have enough money to send me to school. Today mi neva was gwine come [I was not going to come] because mi grandmother neva have no money [because my grandmother had no money].

Boy, eight years old

Miss, my two brothers died. One went off with my father and someone shoot him off in the water and him drown [someone shot him and he drowned]. The other one, it's the police who shoot him. (I was later told that members of this boy's family are associated with gangs.)

Why did it happen?

I don't know why it happened. The last time, I was sleeping and my mother woke me and told me that my brother died. He was 16.

Girl, eight years old

Miss, two persons died in my community. They died last week.

How did they die?

Police shoot them Miss.

A little boy was eager to continue the story:

Miss, I know the two persons she was telling you about. Miss, one neva have on no shirt and one had on a shirt [one was wearing a shirt and the other wasn't]. They go [went] down to their mother's house and ask for \$50 buy bulla [bulla is a local cake] and on their way, they see a police car, so they stood at the wall. The police searched them. Miss, in the news it say that the police didn't find any guns on them. Yet, the police shoot them: X got four shots, two in his head and two in his chest; you could see his tripe [intestines].

Did you see the bodies?

Yes Miss. The dead truck [hearse] neva want teck im up [didn't want to pick up the body] and they call a next one and the next one teck him up [they called another and this second one picked him up]. And one police woman shot X2 inna him [in his] head.

The same boy then told a story about the effects of gang wars.

Miss, people always die in my community. We had a war between my community and another one and them [they] give mi [my] uncle ten shots in his head and mi next uncle say him can't teck it no more [my other uncle said he couldn't bear conditions anymore] and went to country and one youth go country and shot him. (A young man went to the country to execute him. In Jamaica, urban residents normally refer to the rural areas as 'country'.)

The six year-old, who had earlier recounted her parents' deaths, explained that her house is still a target.

Gunmen walk in the yard with guns and when mi [my] grandmother talk, [when my grandmother protests] they come like [behave as if] they want to bait up the yard.

What does this mean, 'bait up the yard'?

Someone explained that it is a common tactic in gang warfare. Gunmen make it appear that they are based in certain rival locations (yards). The police are alerted, raid these houses and may kill, often the male occupants, without question.

Gunmen bait up di [the] yard (the little girl continued). Every night time them deh inna di yard [every night, they are in the yard]. Every night they come. That makes me sad.