

Fact Sheet on Police Violence in the Jane-Finch Community of Toronto

By [Dr. Ajamu Nangwaya](#)

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Region: [Canada](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

·According to Glen Stewart, a former lawyer with the *Community and Legal Aid Services Program* whose service area includes the Jane-Finch community,

“Concerns around policing were one of the focal points ([31] years ago) and, unfortunately, they’ve never really gone away. Recently there have been some incidents where youth have been subjects of violence at the hands of police. That, I think, has brought concerns to the forefront again.”[1]

·In 2002, a survey of youth’s sense of safety in the Jane-Finch, Malvern, Regent Park and Parkdale communities identified police violence and drug trade activities as their number one fear.

Edward Keenan and Jennifer Besner reported,

“The report shows that, among young males in those communities, 54.4 per cent felt that police treatment of youth had a “medium-high impact” on youth safety. By comparison, only 42.2 per cent rated gang violence in the same way.”[2]

·On May 2007, Fitzroy Osbourne, a 29-year-old Afrikan Canadian resident of Jane-Finch was detained without justification in the Driftwood Avenue and Driftwood Court area by Constable Judy Grant of 31 Division. The cop charged Fitzroy with assaulting police and causing a disturbance. The judge dismissed the charges against Fitzroy and condemned the cops for exceeding “the proper scope of their authority” in wrongfully detaining Fitzroy.[3]

·On December 10, 2008, residents in the Jane-Finch community carried out a protest against allegations of police brutality the cops at 31 Division. The residents wrote about their experience of police violence, “Our youth are currently more scared of the police violence than they are of ‘street’ related issues. The over policing of this community has led to increased levels of targeting, harassment, racial profiling and created a fear of persecution amongst residents.”[4]

·On December 13, 2008, Damien Buckley, a 22-year-old Afrikan Canadian man was waiting for a friend in the Jane Street and Sheppard Avenue West area. Constables Nelson Cheechoo and Judy Grant of 31 Division physically confronted Damien and charged him with possession of marijuana under, assault with intent to resist arrest, and disarm a peace officer. Justice Paul M. Taylor dismissed the charges against Damien. The judge ruled that Damien had the right to resist arrest since the cops did not promptly give a reason for

arresting him.[5]

·On May 5, 2010, Junior Alexander Manon, a healthy 18-year-old Afrikan Canadian resident of Jane-Finch died while being forcefully accosted by Constable Michael Adams and his partner. The province's *Special Investigations Unit* cleared the cops of any wrongdoing. While a coroner's jury ruled that Junior accidentally died from restraint asphyxia. According to the Manon family's lawyer, "The officers said Junior Manon was never on his stomach and they never applied any pressure to his back. The jury's verdict speaks otherwise." [6]

·A community-based research project carried out with 50 youth between the ages of 16 to 29 in the Jane-Finch community summarized their experience of police violence,

"When speaking about police, most youth were critical. Youth spoke from personal experience or what they heard from peers. They felt that rather than being helpful, police sometimes make things worse by interrogating people, invading their privacy and not treating community residents with dignity." [7]

·On June 8, 2012, Superintendent David McLeod of 31 Division, an uninvited participant, entered a meeting of the *Jane-Finch Crisis Support Network* and allegedly accused one of its co-chair, Sabrina "Butterfly" Gopaul, of making a statement in an interview that was "borderline criminal."

According to a letter from the *Jane Finch Action Against Poverty* to the *Toronto Police Services Board*, the continued "inappropriate behaviour" led to many members leaving the room, some participants were reduced to tear, and the eventual premature adjournment of the meeting.[8]

·Heavily racialized, working-class communities such as Jane-Finch and Jamestown have long complained about being over-policed. Toronto's downtown core gets the greatest amount of violence-related calls. Communities such as Jane-Finch, Jamestown and Kingston-Galloway fall within "the low-to-medium range for the same calls." [9] The downtown area receives eleven per cent of crime-related news coverage, while thirty-three per cent goes to areas such as Jane-Finch.

In spite of communities such as Jane-Finch being in the low-to-medium range for violence-related requests for law enforcement's intervention, they are targeted and over-policed by the cops, especially the *Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy* (TAVIS) police division, an occupation army-like formation.[10] In the true fashion of an occupation army, TAVIS has its own "hearts and minds" programme in these working-class, racialized communities. TAVIS provides recreational activities, engages in beautification projects, gives free bicycles and helmets to children, sponsors and/or participates in barbecuing initiatives and supports playground construction or rehabilitation projects.[11]

·Lola Lawson, a resident of Jane-Finch and fourth-year Afrikan Canadian student at York University speaks of her experience with police violence, "Even when I'm just driving around there, I get pulled over all the time. There are just so many police on the Jane strip and Finch strip that I get pulled over for no reason. Well, because of where I live. I am being profiled because of my address." [12]

· In November 2014, the *Community Assessment of Police Practices* survey revealed that 31 Division cops were grossly violating the carding policy of the Toronto Police Services Board

that were designed to protect the rights of residents.[13]

·On January 25, 2015, 19-year-old Michael Duru, a Jane-Finch resident, was stopped, questioned and compelled to hand over the papers for a parked rental car. In the process of filming the name tag of Constable A. Keown, Michael was assaulted by the cop and charged with two criminal offences.[14]

The Network for the Elimination of Police Violence is a network of organizations and individuals who co-ordinate community-based responses to police violence.

Ajamu Nangwaya, Ph.D., is an organizer with the Network for the Elimination of Police Violence.

Notes

[1] Tamara Cherry, "Area protests police 'siege mentality'," *Toronto Sun*, December 10, 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.torontosun.com/news/torontoandgta/2008/12/10/7692246-sun.html>.

[2] Edward Keenan and Jennifer Besner, "Police value plummets when communities are afraid of them," *Eye Weekly*, April 1, 2004. Retrieved from <https://edwardkeenon.wordpress.com/tag/police-brutality/>

[3] Betsy Powell, "Police went too far, judge rules," *Toronto Star*, March 20, 2008. Retrieved from http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2008/03/20/police_went_too_far_judge_rules.html

[4] City New Toronto, "Jane And Finch Residents Allege Police Brutality In 31 Division," *City News*, December 10, 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.citynews.ca/2008/12/10/jane-and-finch-residents-allege-police-brutality-in-31-division/>; A video of the protest action - <http://www.jane-finch.com/videos/policebrutalityprotest.htm>

[5] Roger Rowe, Allegations of Profiling: How Much Disclosure of Investigative Records is Appropriate? Pg. 10. [rogerrowelaw.com](http://www.rogerrowelaw.com). Retrieved from http://www.rogerrowelaw.com/document/pdf/Cases/Buckley_Trial_Paper_by_Roger_Allegations_of_Profiling.pdf

[6] CBC News, "Coroner's jury says Junior Manon's death was accidental," *CBC News*, May 8, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/coroner-s-jury-says-junior-manon-s-death-was-accidental-1.1299795>

[7] Ollner, A., Sekharan, A., Truong, J., & Vig, V. (2011). *Jane-Finch Youth Speak Out: Turf Violence Well-Being*. The Assets Coming Together For Youth Project. Retrieved from www.yorku.ca/act/reports/Jane-FinchYouthSpeakOut.pdf

[8] Jane-Finch Action Against Poverty, "Jane-Finch org publishes open letter against Toronto police intimidation of local activist-community leader Sabrina 'Butterfly' Gopaul," *BASICS Community News Service*, July 25, 2012. Retrieved from <http://basicsnews.ca/jane-finch-organization-open-letter-against-toronto-police-intimidation-of-local-activist-community-leader-sabrina-butterfly-gopaul/#sthash.W7CYot1j.dpuf>

[9] Eric Mark Do, "Crime, coverage and stereotypes: Toronto's Jane and Finch neighbourhood," *J-Source*, September 17, 2012. Retrieved from <http://j-source.ca/article/crime-coverage-and-stereotypes-torontos-jane-and-finch-neighbourhood#sthash.TRvVAUTu.dpuf>

- [10] Ellie Kirzner, "Now it's cops playing race card," NOW, August 16, 2012. Retrieved from <https://nowtoronto.com/news/now-its-cops-playing-race-card/>
- [11] Neighbourhood TAVIS Initiative, Neighbourhood TAVIS Initiative Community Newsletter, September 27, 2010. Retrieved from http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/tavis/newsletters/nti_community_newsletter_20100927.pdf
- [12] Carina Samuels, "Debunking the myths of Jane and Finch," *Excalibur*, February 11, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.excal.on.ca/debunking-the-myths-of-jane-and-finch/>
- [13] Logical Outcomes, "This issue has been with us for ages": A Community-Based assessment of Police Contact Carding in 31 Division. November 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.scribd.com/doc/246603303/Community-Assessment-of-Police-Practices-Community-Satisfaction-Survey>
- [14] Natalie Alcoba, "Video of alleged violent takedown by officer being investigated by Toronto police," *National Post*, January 28, 2015. Retrieved from <http://news.nationalpost.com/2015/01/28/video-of-alleged-violent-takedown-by-officer-being-investigated-by-toronto-police/>

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