



# Caribbean Feminist Disruptions of International Public Policy, Human Security and the ATT: An Interview with Folade Mutota<sup>1</sup>

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Life...I don't believe you should just don't roll on and roll off the earth... to the extent that you can serve people and serve people well is the extent to which you could can consider yourself an honourable person.

Folade Mutota

## **Abstract**

Intersections of activism best describes the work Folade Mutota has dedicated her life to from the 1970's to present. In this interview she shared extensively about both her personal and public self. She reflected deeply on those individuals, places and drivers that shape the politics and processes of her activism over time. Mutota's insights on our Caribbean reality, international public policy and her civil society work around gun violence provided an invaluable resource for deliberating on the possibilities inherent in reordering the regional human security agenda by strategically integrating into it a gender perspective.

**Keywords:** Caribbean women; human security; international public policy; ATT

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Folade - Yoruba for honour - has arrived. For Folade Mutota, honour comes in service to others, a theme that repeated itself throughout the course of our time together. As Folade works out her honourable self, there are many women and some men who walk in paths that her service has made traversable. Folade's activism opens doors. Persons working in the areas of human security and gun violence in the Caribbean know that to invoke Folade's name only accrues benefits to their work. From Latin America to Europe to the United Nations Headquarters in Manhattan, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Austria, to the Police Barracks in St James Trinidad and Tobago Folade affords a smile and all conveniences are accorded. Over time, Folade's work reflects her own passion to right injustices and the varied activist frames this passion has motivated her to take on. From Black Power<sup>2</sup> to the women's movement to the passage of the Arms Trade Treaty<sup>3</sup> (ATT), her activism sits at the intersections of anti-racist, anti-sexist work, as well as a longstanding commitment to work against all forms of violence (community based, domestic, against women and young girls). Her work embodies the multiple fronts on which Caribbean women have situated themselves as advocates for a more just region, and by extension, a more just world.

Key to Folade's interventions has been her work on the (ATT) out of which Folade Mutota has become the name and face of feminist-informed activism around gun violence in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean. Folade's interventions have not only been political but have resulted in significant institutional and conceptual expansions within the region. The United Nations considered Trinidad and Tobago's capital of Port of Spain to be the headquarters of ATT Secretariat, a moment that was largely possible as a result of Folade's national, regional and global work on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in her capacity as the Executive Director of the Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD)<sup>4</sup>. Beyond aspirations of placing Port of Spain on the UN headquarters map, WINAD's work on the ATT was an essential intervention in the reframing of the regional gendered discourse on security. This work produced a compelling disruption of the masculinist construction of armed violence as a regional challenge. In addition to this, WINAD has been instrumental in starting a

public dialogue on gun violence and the need for policy to curb this violence. Their work frames these issues not as individual anomalies but as a form of structural inequality. Most significantly, WINAD's work has expanded the region's understanding of human securing as a distinctly gendered phenomenon. To this end, WINAD's mandate is one that highlights the insecurity experienced by women and girls, as well as the place of women and girls within the socio-economic and political dynamics of gun violence. Their work has fundamentally reshaped the region's understanding of gun violence as a gendered dynamic requiring programming, project formulation, and nuanced research and policy.

Before WINAD's work in the area the issue was understood primarily as hyper-masculinity playing itself out through the embracing of a hard anti-education image (Plummer, 2008). Globally framed as a Caribbean and Latin American based problem, where a region with 8.5% of the world's population accounted for 27% of the homicides (UNDP, 2012). At the personal level, in the case of poorer males, gun violence was seen as being a convergence of the following:

- Added pressure to display material wealth
- The intensified need to engage in the 'right gender script'
- An interpretation of money as the absolutely vital resource for a male in relationships. Therefore, much of his status was dependant on the equation having money in exchange for respect, loyalty and sex (Bailey et al. 1997)

In traditional public policy approaches to gun violence, men have been marked as the vulnerable constituency in need of attention. This approach has created a singular policy narrative, one where men, as the bearers of legal firearms, are called upon to defend the country from the fallout from the use of illegal firearms by contending with men, who were the bearers of illegal firearms; in other words, curbing gun violence is achievable with more gun violence. It is within this limited context that public policy becomes framed as a classed intervention, created to address a challenge through a clash of hyper

masculinities, in select regional territories. WINAD's work is an essential departure from such reasoning.

By forcing an alternative approach to public policy on gun violence, WINAD enabled Caribbean women's entry into very complex, regional deliberations on human security and armed violence. Their work brought to the fore previously unheard narratives of how Caribbean women experience, contend with, aid and respond to the insecurities of gun violence and crime. Under Folade's leadership, the organization has reframed the perception of gun violence from a challenge faced by two or three countries, to that of a regional, collectively experienced concern, in need of a shared Caribbean response, by highlighting the fallout from gun violence as a regional challenge, lodged in broader gendered, social, economic and political inequalities.

In August 2017, Folade agreed to sit down with me at my home in St Augustine to share some of her story. In the discussion that ensued, Folade's commitments to women, human rights, dismantling structural inequalities and the need to tell your own story emerged as some of the forces that drove her activism. Throughout our time together Folade modeled the imbricated nature of theory and praxis – as a fixer, a deep thinker and someone entrenched in challenging the inequities that now characterize postcolonial Caribbean realities. Folade's life and her work also provide a lens into the ways in which building a more just world, the geopolitics and history of the Caribbean demand a convergence of intersecting activisms. Glimpses of the novel spaces the region occupies as its citizens devise ways to challenge inequity within the structures of global governance, become evident as Folade shares her experience. A fundamental issue that becomes evident as Folade shares is the critical need for policy making in the Anglophone Caribbean to constantly defy our smallness of size by devising innovative ways of responding to globally-based challenges beyond entrenched, narrow, sectoral and disciplinary silos.

Folade embodies a postcolonial Caribbean messiness that seeks to productively balance a deeply rooted motherland consciousness with a deeply rooted belief

in the wonder and untapped potential of this region she calls home. She remains an Afro-Caribbean revolutionary, still very much committed to the 1970's work of eliminating entrenched, nationally-sanctioned racial inequalities which marked her entrance into activism. In her distinctive African influenced fashion, Folade believes that the Caribbean possesses an influential, distinct voice in shaping how the world understands human security. In this interview, although we ended up spending much time on Folade's work in creating a national and regional position in the international negotiation of the Arms Trade Treaty, of equal importance are the other themes that emerged. These included: the activism that guided her arrival at the issue of security, her belief in the need for civil society to ground national governments' policy positions within the lived realities of populations and the need for intergenerational thinking to guide movement building. All of these themes became evident as we grappled to parse the process by which a women's group in the Global South has become a flagship for international public policy making in human security? But first – Folade, her process of becoming, her years of advocacy around black power, and how these have served as a launching pad for some of her more recent work.

August 2017

Folade Mutota (F)

Deborah McFee (D)

D: Folade, your name. Why did you chose it?

F: Umm why did I choose it? (Long pause) It's me...I think. And I chose my name myself –I chose my name even before I went into NJAC<sup>5</sup> – because I felt with the new consciousness I had, I had to do something about it. I really didn't have an interest in somebody selecting a name for me. There's this process that you went through in selecting your name and... well, essentially claiming your name. So you go through a period of fasting, you do a lot of research to find the names and match your personality, your interests, your life's goal as well with your name because your name really is supposed to represent who you are. You know? Each name has a meaning.

So I went through all that, I selected my name and then I went to Makandal Daaga<sup>6</sup> and I said these are the names that I'm going with. And he had another view, and I said those are the names I'm going with (joyful laughter). So yes that's how I chose my name and why I chose my name. I always had all intentions of going into NJAC, because of what in my mind NJAC represents. So I just prepared myself and aligned myself with all the things I thought the organization represented. So yes, that's me. And then, I changed my last name when I met Ako Mutota<sup>7</sup> because he had a stronger last name. Mutota was a stronger name than the name I had before and I said 'okay that's the name I want'.

D: What does Mutota mean?

F: Mutota is a South African name and Mutota was the ruler of southern Africa, so at one time all the countries of South Africa were under the rule of Mutota. Then over time I also came to learn that it also meant – in one of the South African umm dialects – the gatherer. And so that was fitting. Well of course I had

had the name long before so I just said, thought 'okay I think that makes sense' (laughs).

D: Folade, so what- what about your growing up experience made you decide 1) that the NJAC was the trajectory and 2) that this needed to be "honourable" in that way?

F: I'm not sure it has anything to do with my growing up experience (laughs). You know, because my mother, or Mammy, which is my surrogate mother, she felt that you're from Laventille<sup>8</sup> but you don't have to be of Laventille so she would do everything to kind of steer you away from what she thought Laventille represented. So we don't know anything about going to people house, or liming, or standing up under a standpipe to talk. No no no no no. What I found interesting in my life is that when I became an adult, I tried to just kind of reverse all of the things that she had taught me. You know, so she would, actually ... last week, I was talking to somebody and it came up and I said, but you know we used to come into Port of Spain for recreation. So in the evening, for example, on a hot day like today we come home, she cleans your sneakers and your this and that and the other and umm you do your home lesson, Daddy would take up your home lesson. She would start it, because while she's cleaning your sneakers and uniform and whatever else, you would start your home lesson. Then he would come home and he would finish up your home lesson with you, but she would take you down to window shop, so you're-you're rolling around Port of Spain doing window shopping and thing, you get tired, you come home and you sleep in your bed in the night. And then on Saturday the lime was you go confession in the Catholic Church and then you go in the Savannah or the museum or whatever, so the recreation really was outside. I don't know about and it never occurred to me about my recreation being in Laventille. That wasn't my experience.

So I came to NJAC... so she (her mother) used to be in all the marches, especially funerals. She was in all of that. Umm I came to NJAC... in secondary school I attended South East Port of Spain and there was some problem...now



what was the problem? Something happened in the school and they start to talk about putting us on a shift system with Woodbrook Secondary so I led this demonstration against that. Umm I think you know... this was in 74 or something. Umm and so of course NJAC had already been out there and so on. Makandal Daaga was our neighbour, so when they were having activities you would hear what's going on but I mean we weren't accustomed to going there and so on. I went to those activities even at his home when I became an adult. Umm but I mean the...you know, the-the-the information was around. You know, I was curious about the information, I started reading umm and then in order to get into NJAC in those days you had a year of orientation which required a lot of reading and educational sessions and that sort of thing. There was that whole process of orientation you had to go through before you could join the National Joint Action Committee. I decided that I was ready. I'm not sure I was ready to serve the country; I don't think there was any highfalutin thing in my head. I just felt that there was wrong and that you had to do something to correct the wrong and you play your role.

D: What was the wrong that drove your passion?

F: I think the whole business about the status of African people, you know? You look around and you realise (clears throat) people struggling and you start to realise 'but wait a minute, I come from a place where people always struggling'. But you now learn why people struggle as much as they do here as opposed to someplace else. Umm and-and-and the whole business...there was a lot of violence at that time against the revolutionaries. I don't like violence and I don't like taking advantage of people. THAT!!! I could tell you came from my upbringing (raises voice, then laughs). So yes, I felt obligated really to play a role in strengthening the work of an organisation that was trying to reach the masses and get people more conscious about themselves. Umm because I... you know, it seems to me that if you're comfortable with-with you, you could face the world, you know? One of the great things about NJAC is I look at how, well of course I did that after I joined the organisation. I look at how NJAC would celebrate Indian Independence Day. They would observe Indian Arrival Day

and with the same big, grandiose kind of ceremony that they would have for something like African Liberation Day, you know? And that for me was an indication of a place where justice is practiced, you know? And you could see people and there's no fear of the other. Even to deal with-with white people or any other kind of people. There was no fear of the other.

I think that is one of the things that NJAC taught me and in recent times I've been thinking umm about it more and more because I'm listening to some people talk about 'our people and my people' and-and I'm saying you know...for people who never had to run from police (laughs), this business about coming out here and playing cute. You are talking for people and representing people. You compare that to what people went through to bring this society to a stage where African people could be themselves, hair, clothes, anything. Where you roll in you, going to church, you wearing your clothes (ethnic wear/ African influenced garments), you're going in some formal thing, you going to a concert. You're comfortable to wear your clothes, you know?

And- and Oh God this whole business about this umm what they call it? This natural hair thing that these children carrying on. I'm saying but what is it? What is this? (Laughs) so anyway... but that's just an aside. But yes it is a-a place that you, you don't fear the other. I think that's an important place to be in life.

When I say don't fear the other so that if I have to, if I have to fight for resources to do my work or to meet my needs or whatever, I'm not fighting because the Indian people have. That's not my struggle, that is not my struggle. So I am not afraid then of the UNC?. Which is why NJAC would join with the UNC in government, I'm not afraid. So my language then doesn't have anything to do with 'them people and all of them corrupt' and all of the other things I hear people saying. Umm it's not to say that you don't have some miserable people inside there but the whole business about saying it's we against them, that's not, that's not in my-my frame at all. You know, so I don't have a fear that Indian people go take over and they have so much and they-they...No.

D: That's not the...that's not the nature of your activism?

F: No that's not, and it never has been, and I'm really grateful for that. And for somebody coming from Laventille that could've been a natural fear I would have. We don't know Indian people. We have five Indian families in the whole place and all of them assimilate, I mean come on. Umm so that-that... the....coming from a place like that it's easy then for you to have a fear of the other, right? So I'm always grateful for that orientation in NJAC. I don't walk around with that chip on my shoulder. At all.

D: How has your activism changed over time or has it changed?

F: It has definitely changed. Now I just look on and say 'oh dear'. I just accept that, that is what it is, you know? And just dig deep and come up with a strategy to deal with that situation. Umm, yes, the-the work on...for example you were talking earlier on the work around security. The work around security... part of that had to do with something I had gone through. I began looking at people, especially women and women leaders who really kind of just decimated people's character, mash up your self-esteem. I said, no no no no no no no (shaking head). I'm not doing it and I'm not taking it. I can become very invisible in a flash (snaps fingers). So, we so we had WINAD, and we were focusing on the intergenerational project<sup>10</sup>, coming along nicely. But because I'm from Laventille, anything that happens there, even though I don't live there, immediately gets my attention. So, I'm seeing this gun violence unfolding and I'm saying but ey ey, because it's we nobody ain't taking on this.

D: In what time? I think it's important that you establish the timeline.

F: Oh the timeline? That was 2000.

D: Around 2000.

F: That was 2000. Umm so then I just kind of started talking with people. Even before that, in '99 I invited a group of women who I'd met along my life's path to sit and discuss a concern I had around succession planning in the women's movement and consciousness raising and sort of maintaining a momentum. I have found that over time (sighs) revolutionaries hold on to their revolutionary position and can't speak about anything else, even the language we use, ...you know? And so, you hold your position and then somebody else holds their position which may be opposing or certainly not supportive of your position and so, you are always battling from your corner kind of thing.

I had a concern that we had made a lot of progress but somehow that consciousness, to really kind of stand up for each other, to oppose injustice and so on, it started to slide a little bit. Slide in the sense that people were not as militant. Oh and you asked how my activism has changed? I'm not as militant as I used to be. So we were, we were not as militant and because we're not as militant, a lot of new influences then, started to creep into the work around building consciousness and raising awareness about the injustice that particularly African people experience in this society.

And I'm saying 'but you know we have a lot of young women who are coming up and like they're just rolling around, no sense of direction, nothing at all. What would happen if we were to invest in them by raising their social consciousness? Training them up, exposing them to women who have already demonstrated in their own life's work, a commitment to social justice principles and so on. So that these girls- they're learning, they're growing, but they're also realizing that they have a network of women, who will become their support network infinitely. So you're never alone.'

I believe it's really important for people to know-especially girls-to know that they're never alone. There's this thing I-I say with my family, all of them. I say 'it's you and me against the world you know'. And so, to Chelsea (her granddaughter), Chelsea would say 'Aunty Folade you does tell everybody that!' I say 'well I'm telling you. It's you and me against the world.' Because that

really is my philosophy in life. It's you and me against the world. You must always know that you are not alone. No matter who you have in your life, when you're going down that road you know for sure you have to look back for me, I'm there, you know? So yes, that is important to me, so I thought it would be good if we were to invest in them and look at where their life takes them in ten years. It was intergenerational, we paired them with a-a big sister. But then it's-it's-it's really a kind of intense engagement that we're doing with them because even if it's not a workshop this week or this month, you're in touch with them by phone, somebody taking them out, somebody sharing something and so on and so forth. So my thing was 'let me invest in them little young girl and see if we could have a little difference' because the people I was seeing leading the women's movement are all mad.

So my thing was become invisible to that lot and build and grow a new pool, you know? And you grow a new pool by investing in it and giving it sometime to-to-to flourish. So we started...so I-I called together these women and ...

D: This was in 2000?

F: This was in 1999, November 24th 1999 because I wanted to do it in observance of November 25th so it was November 24th.

And so I said to them 'this is what I'm thinking, this is what I'd like to do. What do people think? Do people think it's useful and so on?' They said 'yes,' but of course it was just one meeting and everybody went back in their corner ... but I needed to test what I was thinking on people and if it was going to fly with these women who I'd known for a long time and sort of engaged with in different ways over time and who would come up with different experiences. So, I went about handpicking those women because I wanted different voices at the table so that at least when I'm finished with that meeting I have a sense of whether this is a good idea or not so it's not just let's say, some NGO person or something like that. I wanted to have that mix so we got that. And Sattie Narace for example was one of the people who I invited. We weren't friends at

the time, but I had done some work with her and I was impressed with her. Her honest kind of self-presentation.

D: Refreshingly disarming (laughs)?

F: Refreshingly disarming. So, I invited Sattie who turned around and became a founder of WINAD. Jillian, who was a young, young, young woman. She would have been like very early twenties. I'd met Jillian in a...something the network had done, and looked at how perplexed she was in that environment and I said 'let me take this girl'. So, I invited her, she became a founder. So, the three of us were the founders of WINAD. And then yes, my liming<sup>11</sup> partners from Sangre Grande, their perspective was the social dimension. It was that kind of mix, so yes. By 2000, I was seeing this thing happening in Laventille and I said 'oh dear'. So I brought it to the attention of people again and we went and we started talking to people. You talk to NGO people and they say 'well we don't really...'

D: And what year you started talking to...? 2000 and what is this thing? Tell me, give me something.

F: The gun violence.

D: The gun violence.

F: The gun violence. People started to get killed. You saw where there were more homicides using guns, right? I started to look also globally to see what was happening, to try and understand what is this trend that I'm seeing coming because my thing was what I see coming going to run-over everybody. So if you're talking to NGO people and they would say 'well we're not working with this, our thing is HIV or whatever'. My point was, no matter what we working on, what's coming here is going to affect that. Because at the end of the day, you would not have been able to go into any community to do any work if people shooting down the place (laughs). I mean bullet ain't have eyes.

So anyway, we went to the police, Guy<sup>12</sup>, Guy was the commissioner at the time. Yes, Guy was the commissioner at the time. Before that I had dealt with Jules Bernard... Jules Bernard<sup>13</sup>, he wasn't the-the gun thing, I don't remember what it was but Guy, he was the person. So Guy just wouldn't move on it, he didn't see...as a matter of fact he said to me 'but Folade, what allyuh doing in this kind of...what allyuh<sup>14</sup> doing in this kind of work? I expect allyuh to be working on umm drug rehabilitation and thing, allyuh is women.'

D: Folade why did you think a women's organisation had the right in that policy space?

F: Of course. I don't see hard and soft issues. I really don't. No, I know at a personal level. I mean I know you could go on a, on a podium and make a presentation and say that. I simply don't see hard and soft issues. I do not see hard and soft issues. Umm I don't think I ever have. I-I don't think I ever have. What I, what I believe is, there's a need, and a need needs a response. So I remember when I was in secondary school I refused to do some subjects. It used to be in those days, typing, shorthand and something else and I absolutely refused to do, to choose those subjects.

D: Office procedures?

F: Something so, that mix up. We used to do shorthand in my days right. It was shorthand, it was typing, now I learnt to type because typing is good for me. But I said I'm not doing those because I'm not prepared to make coffee for anybody. Because I grew up in a particular way.

F: Of course, at-at that time it-it did not register to me why I saw life in that way but later in life as an adult I realised that ...Oh, when it hit me was after Mutota had said to me that we are in a relationship and I don't come to his house to wash his clothes and everybody's talking about it. I was in shock because I had never washed anybody's clothes. My sister and I used to get our allowance from Daddy every Friday when he came home. He came, he would bring chicken

from Honeycomb, he would bring something from Coelho, he would bring a flask for him and Mammy to drink, something for me and right. If you wash a handkerchief, if you said, 'Daddy let me wash your handkerchief for you and your pair of socks'. He would pay us, you getting extra money for that. My mother never (laughs) let me wash my daddy underwear and his shirt and vest and all these kind of thing. So this business about washing clothes for men, it never occurred to me that you do. Now she did it. Of course she's washing for everybody, but in my head I'm not associating myself with that because she's washing for me and she's washing for everybody else and she never one day said well you know...what what what. If you wash daddy socks and a kerchief you know it's a little extra thing you getting and that was a joke and you know?

F: Yes. So yes so I say 'but (laughs) but if you have people who does wash your clothes, if you have people who does wash your clothes I don't understand why anybody would be talking about me?' You know, and poor fella...so we had to...but he was so perplexed and you know, like I'm seeing it in his face like this pain (laughs) about 'why do you not understand this?' (Laughs)

D: But Folade is it that...what comes to mind is an un-titled feminist sensibility?

F: Girl I don't know what it was you know.

D: Do you think, do you think that was a product of what your mother was doing and what your father was...

F: I am a product of that. My mother, I remember daddy always used to say to her 'But you don't teach these girls to do anything for themselves. How they going to make it in the world?' She ain't business, she ain't business. I don't know about this business about you clean house. So you had this drill on Saturday mornings, you went to market, you come back, she was the one to clean the fish, clean the provisions, clean the da da da, da da da (counting on her fingers). You might shine some furniture, or something like that, that's the end of your story right there. But I don't know anything about taking care of a man.



When I say, I mean so, alright so Daddy, okay I'll give you an example. A chicken has two legs. So, if Daddy gets a leg, Folade gets a leg. There was nothing in that household that says 'he name man and he has to get...' I don't know what's the best parts- the leg, the breast, the this, the that and the other. No. The chicken cut up in parts, there were four people to eat, and it went down like that. And so umm yes umm the business about wait until your father come for correction and-and all this kind of thing. You know when that started happen? When we became teenagers.

So, my Daddy is a good soul, he used to take real good care of me, you can't hope to have a more loving man in your corner than he and he doing everything for you. So there was nothing inside there that says that women are supposed to do this and...when Mammy gone to play mas or she gone to work in white people kitchen, he combing our hair for us to go to church. And on Carnival Tuesday she get up early, cook the food leave it there, he pack it in the bag and take Grace and I down the road. Gone and sit down by the savannah and when she coming across the stage with the band she come and eat and she gone.

D: Coming from gender relations 101?

F: Gender, what are your gender...what you call them? Gender moments?  
(Laughs)

D: (Laughs) Gender uh huh moments.

D: Folade listen (laughs) this issue is about gender and policy so I need to get there quickly. So you started, you spoke a little bit about the security work around WINAD. You've been around the women's movement and other activisms regionally for a long time. Umm tell me about the idea. How do you, how do you...how do you get into these spaces? The policy spaces? I've listened to you talk about Guy and I've listened to you talk about Jules Bernard.

I've seen you negotiate these spaces. What is the...1) tell me how do you get into these spaces and what is the relevance of it to your activism?

F: I have a strategic mind. I don't have a quick thinking mind but I have a strategic mind. And I always believe that a problem has a solution, so my work is to find the solution. Ain't no point complaining, so my work is to find the solution. When my son behaving bad I does say 'okay let me find a solution'. So I always feel very proud of myself for the relationship I've been able to develop with the police. Simply because of my NJAC experience. In the days when I served in NJAC it was not pleasant. So the business about calling Guy at the office and asking to meet for an appointment, tracking him, tracking him, tracking him until I get the appointment, it's not something that I would've done in my earlier period of activism. One of the things that I feel confidently proud of internally is-is the relationship with the police that I'm able really to sit down across a table with a police officer and have a discussion. I mean, you know I remember a discussion umm during the same work meeting with some of the-the former Burroughs<sup>15</sup> Flying Squad people and having to deal with them and I'm sitting there thinking 'wow life has changed'.

D: During the first...the umm...

F: WINAD's work on security? Yes Craig and all of them were umm Flying Squad people.

D: Tell me about the Flying Squad people when NJAC...

F: Well umm Randolph Burroughs had this side called the flying squad and they were...that was the unit really...like now you have IATF<sup>16</sup> and that's the kind of crack-shot...so that was the unit that really targeted NJAC people. Umm and it was serious, serious conflict, serious serious conflict, you know? Umm so yes I guess we all get old and mature and we can be civil. So-so yes I'm saying that I have a-a very strategic mind and when I realised that I was knocking at doors... because I really didn't have an interest in working on security because I had

had enough security in my life already. Umm and the whole business about having to deal with guns and no, that was not an interest I had. I had done my duty where that was concerned. But, in speaking with people I realized that people weren't shifting and the police was just kind of being the police. I said 'let me find some support for this work to help us financially but also technically to better understand this issue and to deal with it because there is nothing you could do about it, it's coming. I feel deeply up till today that 1990<sup>17</sup> really made a significant negative contribution to the level of firearm violence that we are experiencing within the society. I'm really really opposed to it and so I felt that we had found ourselves in a situation where we had to respond because there's nothing you can do about it, that's where you are. And as a society, if you put on your blinders it will just get worse and then you're going to be defenseless.

Anyway, so I started looking around and just kind of started connecting globally and that's how I connected with IANSA<sup>18</sup> and just kind of asking people to come in and help us. In 2002 we held the first workshop that we ever had which we brought together people from the security sector, along with civil society, the social sector, and the government social sector. The only security agency that didn't turn up was the Trinidad & Tobago Police Service (TTPS). So I said 'well I'm going to have another one and they will have to be there.' Well that's the other thing about me as well, like I said, I would think strategically and so when I line up my blocks I line up my blocks. And I'm going after, after it. So we started working. Trevor Paul was the, was the Deputy... he was the Deputy Commissioner or something and I'd known Trevor Paul before. So I started working on him because I just thought 'well okay Guy is not the police. He could be the Commissioner but he's not the only police.' You need to find somebody who can get you inside there so when you talk about how do you enter these policy spaces? You need to identify who are the key people. Who could be your drivers within an organization to get things moving? And I have a very simple formula. I identify a champion, it's-it's a strategic approach that those gurus say you should use and I find it works well and it worked well for us with the ATT. I went...I identify a champion and I identify a driver or drivers. I don't ever rely on one person. And then you start working it.

D: Folade, how do you sell this whole idea of women, guns, and public policy?

F: Don't say anything about women, present yourself. We went through that whole ATT campaign and up to now I have not stood up and tell them 'you see this is a women's organization.' They just felt it. Everybody who interfaced with us in that campaign interfaced with WINAD. No matter how you tell them CDRAV<sup>19</sup>, they interfaced with WINAD. Present yourself. You've got to know your work and do your work. There are different ways in which you fight. I always say I believe in nonviolence. But there's always a space for a battle and you must always claim the right to take that space when it becomes necessary. So you present yourself and you present yourself with facts. And people talk a lot about passion and passion and passion. I like facts and I like boldness. 'Here I am. I'm not going away.'

D: Folade, over time in your work...so you talk about that with the ATT, tell me, has there been a change in how you approach policy? Tell me how you would have dealt with policy before?

F: Before, the way I would've dealt with policy is protesting. You hit the streets, which I still believe in, you hit the streets. I guess now we have social media and so you just hit the streets a little bit differently, but I believe even in the era of social media it is still important to walk, to demonstrate. I believe there is spirituality with walking, having your feet on the pitch, on the grass or wherever it is. Bringing your personhood to the life of the earth, saying, speaking what you want and putting it into the universe, that kind of thing. I believe in that, but like I said now you can do things. You can use different approaches or albeit you use them simultaneously as we did in the-the child marriage campaign<sup>20</sup>.

So my activism in the past really was protest demonstration. I'm not a letter to the editor kind of person. I would do a news release and I would hit the mass media, do interviews and that kind of thing. I'm not a call-in person either on the electronic media. My activism has changed because I have, I think I have....

Now, I rely more on research to sell the ideas which is why you'll find I'll want us to do this paper and this paper, no matter what work I do. One of the things I've found over time, is that you can do a lot of work in communities. Not even in communities, as a national NGO you can, you can do a lot of work, whatever your workshop, your conference, your whatever. But if somebody isn't capturing that work and writing it up, then, the shelf life is not as long unless you write it and then you could circulate it and people could refer to it and so on. Also writing allows you to track the changes you've been through. So a paper that you wrote ten years ago you go back and say 'ey you know I went and make that point but look the language could've been so much more delicate.' You know, that sort of thing? So I've gotten a, a greater appreciation for that approach. I think that marriage is a more successful approach to use.

D: Marriage between...?

F: So my formula is...never move from the ground. I will always find a reason to go into a community. Even if I'm not doing a project I will attend something that you're having because for me, I think it's important when you see people interacting with each other or even interacting with a football, there's, people's personalities come out in different ways so it's important for you to be there to be able to gain that. Separate and apart from the fact that really you just kind of want to be among those people, you know? So I think that, that mix of doing your work in the community, the research that gives you the papers that allows you to enter another space as well. And then getting to leaders and-and-and key stakeholders to have discussions with them about what you're seeing, what you want to get done? How it can mesh with what they're interested in or not? Also, to learn from them. So I think it's a, it's a...that coming together of different kinds of approaches is what I tend to go with now. Umm but I'm not sure that it's so much different. I think out-outside of the writing, it's pretty much the same approach.

F: People centered.

D: I've seen you do it. There's a way in which you negotiate scholarship, activism... I've seen you do the public policy and you negotiate those spheres very... in a very productive way and so what I really want to ask you is- are there moments of conflicts as you try, as you negotiate these spaces?

F: Not as yet, not as yet. I'll tell you why I say that. Because I see them all as equally important. None-none-none is weighted more for me than the other and I think that is what works for me. I don't weight any more than the other. And I'm, I'm also very comfortable in all of those spheres. I think my area of greatest weakness would be in the writing part of, but in terms of work in community or with communities of practice and policy people yes. Why it hasn't become problematic as yet, or has conflict as yet, is because I tend to build relationships. So when you talk about how do you enter these spaces, I build relationships with people.

So like I said I identify the champion and I identify my drivers but I'm building relationships with these people as well, because as far as I'm concerned everybody needs to walk away with something. Ain't no point fooling your facts around that. Everybody needs to walk away with something. Your something might be different to my something. Everybody needs to walk away with something and they should have the right to walk away with something. So what I try to do is to determine what is the "something" that is important to this person. Some people you never get it right, some people take longer than others. Some people it's...you know. So I build relationships about how we would work together and because I would build those relationships I'm in a position to say to you 'I'm comfortable with this, I'm not comfortable with that.' That whole ATT thing was successful because I built a relationship with Eden Charles<sup>21</sup>.

D: With whom?

F: Eden Charles. And because I built that relationship he knew what would fly with me and what would not. And then for us too there was, he had an interest

in NJAC as well. He had, he had been around and-and that sort of thing. So there were some things that you could speak about.

D: Tell me... now I will, I will describe the ATT process in a WINAD context as the crystallizing of human security concerns in Trinidad and Tobago as it relates to gun violence fitted into a global governance structure. And that is international public policy.

D: Talk to me a little bit about the genesis of that for you, that ATT process. What made it easy for you all to...what made it accessible? Because you all were impacting international public policy. What made this accessible?

F: Boldface behaviour (laugh).

Because the ATT was not government or NGOs...our NGO partners the big organizations did not see CARICOM as a player in that ATT.

D: Who were the big organizations?

F: Big organizations would've been the Oxfam, the Amnesty International, the IANSA. Those were the three parties really.

D: Date this work for me.

F: That umm that would have been... so before ATT... there was a lot of work...so ATT was over ten years. There was a lot of work before. The ATT was a build-up from discussions around controlling umm conventional arms within your borders and so on, building in more robust processes to monitor and that kind of thing and then it-it evolved in layers, because global civil society started to push for... So some countries had good, strong measures in place and some didn't. Oscar Arias who used to be the president of umm Costa Rica for example, was arguing that you need everybody to have strong mechanisms in place. It ain't make sense you have and I don't have. The thing is going to fall down and.... he pulled together I think it was 20 Nobel Laureates plus himself and they started to

lobby governments to bring a discussion to the fore at the UN around how do you control the trade in arms.

D: This was when?

F: So that would've been happening in the early 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 kind of thing. Now we got involved with IANSA in 2001 I think. Umm and there was this man... So up to this day I always tell people I don't ever want to go to a meeting without having a plan of what I'm walking away with. So every time they invite me to a meeting I will go to the meeting with a plan for how we could get support for our work down here and get resources to do the work. So IANSA used to...we had the UN Programme of Action that came in 2001 and so every two years there was this meeting and I looked at that and I said 'that's a very important place for us to be'. And Trinidad and Tobago rolling out and coming and sitting down in the people place and ain't saying nothing. So I say well no, this can't happen. So I started working now on the government here, Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Security and then working on NGO partners globally saying 'I want greater visibility for what's happening in the Caribbean because I see people dying, it changing up things and so on and so forth.

So IANSA used to be in charge of bringing NGOs and so my thing was I needed to get more of our people here, engaged in this conversation because I mean even us in WINAD... people weren't talking about it. When we, you know if we're going by the police and if we're doing something people would come on board but in terms of... it-it was a scary thing eh. This business of going up against them fellas with guns and so on. That was a scary thing so people weren't really too enthused. So I said to IANSA, the money you're going to spend on me to put me up in a hotel, give me that money and I will bring myself and somebody else on this money so that I expose more people to these meetings. And because all of us have family in Brooklyn we could sleep by them and we could come to meetings and so on. So each time I would bring somebody, so that more people would be exposed, because when you go into the UN and you see and you meet people and so and so. So that was my



strategy for really widening the pool of resource people that we would have. Then I was invited to sit on this International Steering Committee that was looking at this question of conventional arms controlling the thing. When I looked at the line up for this thing and I listened to them I say well 'we not inside here.' I said to them 'here's what, this is important for CARICOM. We know that we don't produce and we don't buy plenty, that's okay. But we are seeing the effects of it and therefore we have to be equal partners around the table.' So I went through that struggle to try to get NGOs to see us in this region as people who qualify to be around the table. So I did that and having done that, then I started to work on the governments. And, in working with the governments, you know CARICOM governments don't have a history of working with civil society in a respectful way.

D: Do you think that is one of our major public policy issues?

F: They're damn disrespectful bad bad bad bad. So I looked and I said 'well something had to happen here because I'm not letting this go.' So then I had to roll back and decide how I had to deal with them and I said 'I'm from Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago holds the responsibility for crime and security in CARICOM. Trinidad and Tobago has to be the champion in this. And I started working Eden Charles and up to now he will tell people how I used to run him down all over.

D: What was his position at that time?

F: He was a-a-a... I don't even think he was a Deputy Head of Mission or anything at the time, he was one of the officers.

D: One of the Foreign Service officers.

F: It is through our work that he got that ambassador thing you know. Yes, yes, yes, I started to work him, because I'd met others, but I looked at him and I said 'this boy has some potential here, I'm moving with him,' and I started to work

him. Nights... I mean 2 o'clock in the morning, 12 o'clock in the night I'm on the computer writing statements for Eden to make and all kind of thing, send it across to him. He would work out how he wanted to present it and we started hitting the ground. Because I went and I sat down with him and I said 'here's what. We outside the loop here and we can't afford to be. So we have to do this.' He say 'alright'. He came on board and that was it. He was my driver inside there and then I brought in Ken Epps. Even before that time I brought in Ken Epps and the Brazilians and different people and got them on the TV, to the ministry thing thing thing thing thing. A lot of time saying to people 'this is what happening in other places, this is what can be done. This is an NGO willing to work with you.' We got plenty "steups"<sup>22</sup> and that's alright. But I think one of the things I've learnt—with this work—is that when, not always, but I find far more often than not, when people realise that you're committed to going the distance, whatever it is that you're trying to sell them...

D: Folade you have...so tell me how have you seen the policy space change or has it changed? Because you are coming from a...

F: I can speak specifically around security because...

D: Around security yes because you're talking about... which is such a masculinist space also.

F: It's a masculinist space and needless to say of course they've told us that... I told you Guy tell me 'but what are you doing in this?' Umm...

D: But you're beating down this door. Tell me...

F: But yes yes.... Well you see I don't know where Guy. No, I think he's from, he was from where? Toco? Or some place there? Anyway, I know he wasn't from Laventille and my interest was in saving Laventille people so there was nothing to stop me from doing what I had to do. So I take that I roll with it, I get some money for a meeting and I call him. He said 'well Folade if you have the

money'.... I can't say the man ever bawl at me or disrespectful. You know, it's that kind of subtle, dismissive, disrespectful kind of thing. I say 'that ain't nothing, I-I walking with that.' And I call him, I say 'I have this money, I want to do this.' He say 'well if you have the money, why are you bothering me, I ain't bound to come.' I say 'alright.' I gone by Trevor Paul. I say 'Trevor, send somebody to the meeting for me.' He send Oswyn Allard and that was it with me and the TTPS there you know. Jillian (laughs), Jillian use to be on Oswyn Allard case. That was it you know. Oswyn come in the meeting and he said 'well ey I ain't realise is that allyuh talking about all the time.' From there he became our driver inside the TTPS.

D: Oswyn Allard?

F: Yes.

D: What was different about his context?

F: Allard? He was a bad police. (Laughs) he was a bad police<sup>23</sup>. He came in and we went to work and he saw, he realised that it's not...you know a lot of times especially public officers they have this thing about whether you're trying to set them up and that kind of thing? He realised well ey ey it's not that. And then of course being a bad police he looked and he saw it's a bunch of women, I could manage them. You know, so that worked very well for us (laughs).

D: WINAD's work has an interesting relationship with feminisms. You talk about not necessarily having to say that you are feminists, but it is in how you present yourself? (Actual question not clear here)

F: You present yourself.

D: And-and being a woman in a space around security.

F: And you ain't seeing no men on the team.

D: How do you... because I mean it is...how are you managing this thing? The whole idea of managing femininity in this masculinist space?

F: I don't know. For me it was... I was driven to do it and I wasn't prepared really to let any hangups that they may have, that may make them think that as a woman you can't do this or the other... it couldn't stop me because what had to be done really was more important than me having to tell you 'be careful how you're talking to me, you know.' I didn't need to tell you that because if I turn up at your door as a woman to tell you I come to talk about guns and I had a meeting with them gangsters in wherever and this is the outcome of the meeting and this is what we want to do, There's nothing else for me to say after that. You understand and should be sufficiently sensible to understand that you're dealing with somebody who really don't have any qualms with calling you out if you do foolishness.

So for me it was a kind of fearless mission because I felt deeply that the work had to be done and that I could do it. And then that was the other thing. Although I came to the issue quite reluctantly, when I looked left and right I realized, but nobody is running with this. I just decide I was going to do it. And anybody who knows me will tell you if I make up my mind I'm going and do that, then I'm going and do that. So, by the time I go to present myself to Martin Joseph<sup>24</sup>... Martin Joseph was a good example. I gone by Martin Joseph. Martin Joseph said to me 'Folade, let me tell you something.' Now this is after I'm going on and on to meet with him eh? He dodge, he weave, he dee dee dee dee. Let me tell you something. 'You see them thing you talking about, that is not for me. You talked to Hazel Manning as yet? That's who you need to talk to.' I think she was in... that's when they made her a minister.

D: Education.

F: Something so. He say, 'I understand what you're saying. I understand all that you saying but I come in here to deal with a problem that we have' and that was in 2004 when we were having a lot of killings.

D: That was one of the high point years. 2004 was when we reached 400.

F: That's right, that's right.

And he said 'you see that situation? That is what I came here to do. I cannot deal with what you're talking about. What you're talking about is necessary, it has to be done but I'm telling you I'm not the one to deal with that now.

D: What was the difference? What was so... because I-I'm thinking...WINAD is dealing with gun violence, Martin Joseph is the Minister of National Security, he is dealing with the impact of gun violence. Why is it represented so differently from one...in one space than the other?

F: Because WINAD is saying to Martin Joseph 'you're holding on to this position of more gun, more this, more that'. And we're saying to you 'if you don't see the people who causing this violence in some kind of way, you ain't go done buy gun.<sup>25</sup> So his point was 'I understand that. I know that's the direction that I have to take at some point but not at this point.' At this point, it's fire against...fire and fire, you know? But because we went with a package, that we left with him, under a month after that meeting Jillian calls me up to say 'you hear Martin Joseph?'

D: What was in the package?

F: The package was materials on gun violence, not only here but how it's playing out in other places and some of the initiatives people had used and so on and Martin Joseph was on the people media talking and using the material that we gave him. At that moment, I realized we had turned the corner because although Commissioner Guy would've said to me 'well Folade why you ain't thing?' He wasn't my hardest nut to crack. My hardest nut to crack was

Martin Joseph. Anthony Roberts was the Minister in the ministry but he was under Martin Joseph at the time.

(Laughs) I remember a time we went to a meeting and Anthony Joseph say 'yes we supporting WINAD.' Jillian –she have no cap for she mouth eh–'she said, supporting WINAD? Where's the cheque?' (Laughs)

F: She was young, she was young, she was twenty-something.

D: It's still a relevant question, it's still a relevant question! (NGO work needs monetary support, not to be coopted by the government. In small economies, with narrow resource bases, that support is necessary).

F: She real matter of fact. Mmhmm, where the cheque? Umm and Martin Joseph gave us money. He gave us money for a regional meeting we were hosting at the time. His Deputy PS<sup>26</sup> at the time was Boucaud-Blake. I remember, because at that time, of course he couldn't come. I remember she called us and apologized because she couldn't come either. But the Ministry, They gave us money for the meeting.

It was a turning point though. When Jillian called me and told me look at his statement. He made a public statement on the gun violence in the country and used some of the language WINAD had provided for him, language that reframed the issue. That, his statement had that information in it, and I went after and saw the statement, that was the turning point in terms of how WINAD's work was looked at by the state.

D: That was around 2004?

F: That was around 2004. It could be 2003, 2004. But wait they came in what, in 2002?

D: I can't remember.

F: Yes because Manning<sup>27</sup> ran 2002 to 2007 so it would've been like 2003 because we had the meeting with Bill<sup>28</sup> and them in 2004 and I think it...I think we met...I met with him before that. The meeting<sup>29</sup> with Bill and them was 2004.

D: I want to...I want to talk about... No I wouldn't talk about that meeting (the 2004 meeting with the community leaders). I just think it is just, it was huge.

D: I'm listening to you.. Folade what I find very interesting about WINAD's work is that what it really does, it-it really disrupts this whole idea of feminist work. Regionally I think we have an idea around women's work, violence against women in very narrow silos. I always find WINAD's work to be a disruption.

F: It's intended to be.

D: Tell me about that.

F: It's-it's intended to be. Umm, it's intended to challenge a number of the notions, some of which you just, you just referred to there. I think to some extent we've become...those of us who do women's work and gender work. We've become complicit in women's oppression.

D: What you mean?

F: Umm we-we we don't seem to believe or perhaps it's unfair to say believe but believe sufficiently in people's right to the things we talk about. Your right umm to have your rights respected and that kind of thing. And so, we seem to have gotten comfortable that...there are women who will get licks and then, there's the rest of us. And given that I don't believe that women should get licks, then I'm on a constant mission really to dismantle anything that contributes to women getting licks. And I find that more and more we've become too taken up with you know, presentations and... those things are important but somehow we've kind of categorised people. So that I listen to how we talk about umm

domestic violence and the language we use about it...if what-what? If you could become economically, financially independent then you could walk away and I'm saying 'but you have to be talking about only one class of women?' So is that in your...in our thinking we've decided it's one class of women who gets hit? Because we know then that it's not and if your argument is that... if you get employment or if you become more financially stable you can walk away, it seems to me that that discounts our whole argument about why violence against women is wrong and why-why it happens and why it's wrong. That troubles me.

D: Do you think we are ready? Do you think activism, whether it's feminist activism, women or whatever. Do you think it's ready –our regional headspace that is–do you think we're ready to have a conversation about the fact that people just want relationship? Because it's easy...to-to me...

F: People who stay in abusive relationships?

D: It has very little to do with class, the economics of the situation. And it's something that I'm working through in my head ... I call it legislating love as it...Are we ready to have that love conversation? Because it would then take us to the fact that not only men beat, not only, not only heterosexual relationships engage in- levels of violence. It takes us into different spaces. It takes us beyond the economics. Do you think we're ready to have that conversation?

F: I think we've backed ourselves in a corner. I'll tell you what I mean. You know earlier on I talked about how revolutionaries, we have our position, we have our language, we have our beliefs and we-we hold on to our position and we there, in we corner and... I think that feminist activism and generally women's work in this region umm has-has...I don't know if it's..Nelcia<sup>30</sup> would say lazy, but we've stopped, we've stopped allowing ourselves to think about solutions. We do not allow ourselves to think sufficiently deeply about people's reality. Which brings me to my class, my class theory.



I think that it's become... The-the people who...the thought leaders and the people who lead generally in this society and this civil society space in this region –not only in women's work– have-have-have sort of carved out a space where they operate from that is separate and apart from everybody else. And they've lumped women who they think are in need of their activism into a class of people who are almost incapable of doing anything on their own. And I think that when-when that happens.... The-the-the business about having conversations around what these people may be saying becomes very difficult because you cannot hear it. Not only do you not want to, you simply cannot because you've already developed this matrix that says this is what this is. This is the behaviour. You need financial support, you need counselling...counselling...this counselling thing is another thing I think people start to get in real trouble for. So you need financial resources, you need counselling, you need a space to go, you need, you need, you need.

When we went to Biche<sup>31</sup> for the last Women's Conversation this woman came and she said 'but why it is as soon as I come and say that my husband beating me, they does tell me to leave? I don't want to leave, I just want him to stop beating me. I just want him to stop beating me. I have my children and....' She went on and on and on and I rock back and I say 'but what the jail is this?' Listen to how this girl very clear about what she needs and why it is that she really don't want anybody to tell her about leaving the man. She has an investment there and the same way that you have an investment in your relationship–It may look different–but she has an investment there. And if the first thing is that she leaves and then you start to talk about if she leave she ain't have this, that and the other, but you're not offering anything.

D: So, tell me, tell me how you think we could have a conversation with feminist activism and public policy that actually engages in that type of analysis?

F: No. Because you cannot do an analysis of people's reality without them being in the room and if we're going to have a feminist discourse on policy and this,

that and the other, that woman in Biche ain't going to turn up. She's not going to turn up. Well first of all she wouldn't be invited (laughs).

D: (Laughs) that's what I'm thinking.

F: You know? And-and that's what I think we really need to do some-some-some analysis of...and I'm not sure how it can be done because-because we've all become so bright and we know it and we've done it and we have all these cases that we could show we've done it, perhaps we don't listen to people. Which is why things like the Women's Conversation are so important and why you kind of need to just go and throw yourself on a bench in Laventille and sit down and drink a beer with people and just hear how them women does live their life.

D: Tell me about that.

F: I keep saying, people do not wait on you to come to save them and I think that's where NGO work has gone to. We see ourselves as helping people so we know it, we could get the resources, we could come and do this and that and the other. Ain't nobody sitting down there waiting on you. When you come, you come to add value, they always have a plan. Even if it's she is in the middle of the river and look left and right she doesn't have a boat to come out of the that-that engulf with water, she has a plan. By the time you reach it's to add value.

D: Tell me about the conversations. Tell me about the Women's Conversations, the idea of it and looking at...

F: It ain't have no Maths in that. People must talk for themselves. And those of us that are out here and we say that we are academics and professionals and this, that and the other, we damn disrespectful and that has got to cease. People must speak for themselves because they can. And we have to encourage structured engagement so that they're not only speaking to us who come in as

researchers or as activists but they're also speaking to the people who make decisions on their life. That's why I invite the Prime Minister to come by we place you know. I say 'we ain't coming by he. Let him come by we. If you have to sweat, sweat. If you have to sit down on top one another, sit down on top one another. Come to the masses where they are.' And we have to encourage that. We have to encourage... I want to see, I'm working on this project now. I want to see this government or whatever government we have...by 2020 for us to have policy on participation in this country. We do not have a policy on participation, we need a policy on participation. You see this jokey business people going around all over the place, sit down on two armchair and say they're having a conversation? That's just not on, it is not on. There has to be structured engagement between leaders and the people who does ask them to lead them. And that has to be somewhere entrenched in and written down and actioned every quarter, every month, every whatever it is you choose to do. There has to be a policy on participation that brings people closer to whether it's their MP or the-the-the Commissioner or the police, the-the Police Complaints, whoever. These people who have office that are serving us, there has to be a formalized process of engagement that doesn't allow them to come and say 'we take six guns off the road, off the street. Be happy.' No no no, that's insufficient, that's woefully inadequate. We have to work towards that. I have, I want to see that done by 2020 in this country. You have the-the policy. Of course we'll have to work and cuss and get on and all kind of thing to make sure that they action the policy but it has to be in this country.

D: What you want to change? What is the aspect of policy making that you want to change to with this...

F: It has to be more inclusive. It has to be a respectful engagement. You'll find I use that word all the time. There has to be respectful engagement with the people of this country. And we have to do it in such a way that over time people learn how it can be done. So right now the way it's done is that so they having a thing down the road and I'm going and I'll get up and I'll get on and who could talk the longest and the thing thing thing thing thing. Everybody go

off equally unhappy. But I'm saying that it can be done differently. Umm it can be done in such a way that people can be... can prepare themselves in clusters before they come into the big meeting. So that we all walk away really with some agreement as to what-what we're going to do. And the recommendations that government for example, as an example, the recommendations that the government gets from the masses, that if we meet now we have to have an agreement that we meet in a month or three months, for you to come back and tell me what you can and cannot do and why you can and cannot do these things. Because that kind of engagement also forces me to prepare myself to come and engage with you, you know. So everybody really, preparing to engage in a governance process that respects their point of view and that brings some tangible benefits. You can't continue spending money on these kinds of things that we do.

So in terms of for me what I-I want to see in policy is content and process, those would be the two elements that I am interested in. Content and process. The content is usually not sufficiently sort of all-encompassing of the different needs. And even when we have policy that addresses to the needs of-of working class people, it is done in such a welfare mode that it's not particularly helpful so I think policy should have a more development mode. There is a space for welfare but umm it can't be that the welfare increases the expenditure in the budget every year and you're happy to say that you're spending more on URP<sup>32</sup> or you're spending more on- on CEPEP<sup>33</sup>. Umm because in doing that you're not... what you do is that when you get into a bind, that's the first thing that you cut.

D: Folade we have spoken about many things- security...and one of the...we've spoken about women. Tell me about the...the idea of rights, you always talk about human rights. What about sexual minorities in the Caribbean. How can we advance that conversation?

F: Who are sexual minorities in this Caribbean? Who, who you talking about? Allyuh put allyuh head outside there (laughs). Put allyuh head on chopping block. Sexual minorities you say? (Laughs)

D: Sexual minorities in the Caribbean.

F: This Caribbean is a complex place you know.

D: Quite.

F: This place very complex with plenty plenty secret. Nuff nuff nuff nuff nuff. (Laughs) I don't know what sexual minorities allyuh talking about (laughs). But I think, if you know, if you were to talk about sexual minorities how do you advance that? Those people who believe that they're not in that sector of people need to stand with them and stand for them. Any room that you are in, if they're not there for themselves you have to bring that to the table as well, you know?

D: Do you think it should be part of the feminist agenda?

F: I imagine it is because I mean people speak all the time and-and do all kinds of things, I think it is. Umm what I think that we need to pay attention to how we present these positions to people and I'll tell you what I mean. So gay and lesbian people, the-the-the whole spectrum in my opinion have an equal wining space. You know, I don't you know, that-that's just what it is. It's not something that I would...it-it's not a discussion I-I would have with people about whether they should be or should not be. I find that's a-a nonsense discussion. However, one of the things I've been looking at and I find that it's something that comes out when you listen to the US whatever that is going on there. I don't know that we are particularly sensitive or sensible about the extent of discomfort that some people feel around this issue. It's all well and good to say they have to get on board because people here and whatever else we say but I think that we need to pay attention to the-the-the high level of discomfort that some people have

in just engaging with this discussion and dealing with these fellow human beings and so on. Umm because I think that you always have to take into account where people coming from so although you would see it as...And I'm not, I'm not suggesting that-that you support or you-you accept some people who are abusive or violent or that kind of thing.

When you look at how some people struggle with coming to terms with what they consider to be a difference, you have to take that into account. You might not agree with it and you need to tell them. But you also need to take that into account when you're presenting because what you could be doing is sort of overwhelming people and consequently losing any iota of support that we may have been able to get from them if we were a little bit more sensitive umm and I think we need to pay more attention to that. Because it's a lot coming at people, at some people at the same time.

If you- if you- if you-and I don't even want to talk about the religious part of it-but if you are not somebody who has ever sort of identified somebody as a gay person or so and then all of a sudden you hearing well okay not only is the person gay, the person umm wants to-to-to have umm physiological changes umm they-they...And while that is going on they're on the TV I don't know, protesting or talking or doing so so so and then they-they challenge you for a position where you're working and you...You see how much thing going on in your orbit right there? All of which you were not prepared for? And I think that we really need to consider a little bit more deeply really how, how we can approach people who are not supportive. Because I think in the final analysis at a human level, everybody going to come around but the degree and the rapidity with which you-you come at people sometimes, you could lose more than you gain and I think we have to be careful around that. Umm and I think that that is a-a conversation that feminist activists could have with people in the LGBTQI community umm as a human rights issue and as a development issue.

I remember years ago when my mother-I could take my mother and brother as examples-when my mother said to me she was going to the wedding of one of

her coworkers. 'She marrying a woman you know. Well I ain't agree but that is she life and she's a nice girl I like she, I going.' You hear me? My brother... this... I don't remember the man's name, it was a gay rapper and I'm looking at my brother and whatever cornrow hairstyle the man had and I'm seeing my brother with it and I'm saying 'Mmhmm it have all kind of ways to come at thing. All kind of ways.' The cussing and the fighting and the getting on, it have a space for that but sometimes you need to mix it up, you know? So you and your mi...what it is you call them? Your sexual minorities?

D: Sexual minorities Folade, get with the programme!

F: But Deborah you see I am not sure how much of a...in a minority people are because this is a highly sexualised not only country but region.

D: That is an interesting observation.

F: That-that-that's my point I was making when I talked about allyuh put allyuh head on a block and talk about sexual minorities because I'm saying I'm not prepared to put my head on no block and say that we have...that this group of people we're referring to are in the minority because I mean...And especially a place like Trinidad and Tobago. I mean we bright you know and very very curious. Yes!

D: So Folade we talked about WINAD, we talked about policy, we talked about all of that. Looking back at your work tell me umm one of the best times, umm a period you like to celebrate and acknowledge, an activity you like to celebrate when you're thinking?

F: An activity I like to celebrate or that I have celebrated?

D: You have celebrated. When you think about a good spot you think about that.

F: I think in terms of... in terms of WINAD's work, that Arms Trade Treaty, that was the high point. That Arms Trade treaty just brought together strategy, research, advocacy, that was the high point. You couldn't stop thinking for that entire campaign. I mean I'm talking about ten years you know. I look at how we built up that campaign to ensure that we had a victory at the UN.

In 2006...You, you came to the meeting in Antigua? I remember in 2006 I looked around and I said 'but this problem we have in this country here'...So of course we already had it in Jamaica and historically it's-it's-it's just going to spread across the region. I just kind of systematically went about just identifying people and organizations and started off with like twelve I think and just built that CDRAV. Because I also realized from the struggle I was going through with civil society and government to see CARICOM as a player, that unless you could bring your numbers to the table, they're not going to take you seriously, you have to fight too hard. So if we had groups in the different countries doing what we were doing here, nobody could count out CARICOM and our governments would not be able to say no to us.

So it was that kind of build up over time. And I-I think I-I think that has been WINAD's best moment, that Arms Trade Treaty. I mean you just had to see that thing in action you know. When you see...I mean we didn't talk about how we mobilized governments across this region. We brought together an expert group for that negotiation you know, for the preparatory meetings for the negotiations and for the negotiations. So for example we brought Customs, Immigration, Police, National Security, Foreign Affairs... went about systematically identifying those people's IMPACS of them on board so that... You see because my thing is the people who want to count you out as them string of islands down inside there with some beach, they don't ever think that you have the human resource capacity because they haven't experienced it. So in all fairness to them they haven't experienced it. Their knowledge of us is that's a real good place to go for vacation, okay? And therefore we have a responsibility, when we come to the table, we have to bring our best team. So we went about getting the best team.



D: How you get the best team?

F: Identify them all over the place. Well I went to IMPACS early, that IMPACS was another story you know.

D: CARICOM IMPACS?

F: Yes.

D: What's CARICOM IMPACS's responsibility?

F: CARICOM IMPACS...Umm they do research and strategy for the region.

D: Okay, around security?

F: Yes yes yes. That's the agency. And that Francis Forbes who was the Commissioner of Police in Jamaica, you talk about steups? You talk about steups? I had to board him at a breakfast table in St Lucia. I have a reputation you know.

D: What is that reputation Folade (laughs)?

F: She don't give up. This man from the Quakers used to tell them, he say 'you see that woman, she don't stop you know. She don't stop.' I remember when I invited, when I took Luana, Luana to come with me to the first meeting in the UN I said 'I'm telling you, walk with a comfortable pair of shoes.'

D: Why?

F: Because I don't sit down.

D: Who's Luana?

F: Louana was one of our members in those early days so she would've come to the maybe 2003 meeting or so at the UN. Remember when I told you I told IANSA give me the money and I'll bring people? So me and Louana went! Yes. And so she used to be the Deputy Mayor of Arima. I met her when I met Sattie and I identified the two of them I say 'I want to work with those two women.' And when I-I start to operate it's like I get to your meeting. Before I come to your meeting I tell you I know what I'm walking away with, anything I get in addition to that is-is lagniappe. I know what I have to say and I know what I have to do. And I didn't realise he used to be watching me so much and then he would say 'that Caribbean woman, she don't sit down.' Because from the time I land I.. Because you see I have to always come back with something eh? When I come home I'm coming back with something. I'm coming back with either contact for us, resources, something something. We must always benefit when we go to a meeting. I don't go to meetings and sit down and lime and I ain't encouraging nobody to do that.

So CARICOM IMPACS, I start to tackle them. That man wouldn't talk to me at all, he wouldn't talk to me, he wouldn't talk to me, he wouldn't talk to me. Alright, just on his case, on his case, on his case. Eh heh? (Laughs) I in St Lucia at a meeting, who's at the-the...at the same hotel? He's at the same hotel. Well I come down the morning and I see him sitting down having breakfast with somebody in my...but my rude self no manners, I went across, introduced myself to him. He said 'no but I know you.' I said 'well I-I wasn't sure.' I said...I ask him for my two seconds. I mean in a situation like that what do you do? So he finished his breakfast and we talked and from that it began to get better. And then...Because Lance Selman who was in charge of CARICOM IMPACS before, he knew of our work when we started on this security work before. So by the time umm Forbes came we already had a relationship with IMPACS. Umm and then he wasn't the leader, it was the woman who was even more elusive. So I said 'well me ain't bothering you know. He is the Operations man so I'm going and bother he. She go reach at some point.' Umm and you see the other thing I would always make sure that they know what we're doing. Whatever we're

doing I'd make sure they know and so they have information. So then I started to get in with him and then got involved with the staff and so on and yes.

So by the time we reached to ATT, it's WINAD who did all the thing. I would go and sit down and say 'who are the people in this region?' Because I don't know them. These are security people, I don't know them. 'Who are the people in this region in terms of security?' And they're very hesitant to give you information. You have to dig them and dig them and laugh and talk and thing thing thing thing but we got it. I say 'I'm going after those people you know.'

There was a... I didn't know at the time there was a regional grouping of immigration and a regional grouping of...uh huh? Gone after them, everybody in-involved. Brought them to meeting and then umm we had a man here who was the deputy for Customs. He was very very good. Eden say 'Folade you need him too you know. You have to find money to bring him to the meetings too (laughs). 'You have to find money to bring him to the meetings too.' So umm...so yes and he became then part of our core... So when we were in the-the prep meetings there. When you see we CARICOM... and CARICOM talking is not so... Eden or Thompson would make a statement for the whole gang of us and then we have the individual statements coming to back it up and I'm writing statement like crazy, everybody talking! (Laughs) So they start to watch CARICOM like 'what going on with them?' Yep. It was, it was that is WINAD'S finest moment because we built a whole project around giving CARICOM and Caribbean people visibility in the security arena. We did not have that before. If nothing else that's what I want recorded. That visibility.

D: So Folade, I am... you know, there-there are a lot of really interesting variables of work. I'm listening to you and I'm thinking 'how do we then record the whole idea of affecting international public policy, the fact that you have a model? The fact that...Tell me about making... Because you-you've kind of brought up a visibility but you've grounded it in this level of expertise. That is something we don't hear about.

F: What level of expertise you referring to?

D: I'm talking about the fact that CARICOM presented this face, this very professional, very... It's like listening to-to people talk about when the international meetings that used to happen when we were first independent. You know, trying to forge this identity and this whole third worldification of the global. And so I'm listening to you and that's the historical context that I come up with because it's the closest to me I've ever, I've ever, I've ever heard...

F: So stick a pin.

D: Stick a pin.

F: You see why that ties straight back to my NJAC experience? It's how you see people, that's what determines how you work for them and with them. I was gung-ho that we were going to be at that table but we were going to present ourselves just like anybody else because we can. You ain't fear nobody, you ain't fear nobody. You coming with what you have because what you have is good. And the other thing about it is that although we had all them government people, so you have IMPACS and you have this and you have that but you also have civil society right in there. When we raised money from the Australian Government to have four regional workshops here for them to craft their negotiating position, NGOs sitting around the table had equal space for talking and so. And you know you have some meetings that NGOs... well first of all you can't speak around the table and then you could only have input.. no no no no no...no no no no no.

And I am not sure that there's been a situation in our region where NGOs have raised money to fund government participation in meetings or workshops, I'm not sure. And we-we did that because I, when I looked left and right and I realised I say all of them go tell me they ain't have money, to a man they tell me they ain't have any money. They can't do this and they can't do that da da da da da. I'm not engaging in that you know, I'm going and find the money. When

I find the money you have to tell me you're not coming. If you're not coming you have to say why you're not coming. So we went out and we found the money.

D: So in other words you-you-you're advocating a model where NGOs make public policy because you do.

F: We do!

D: You do because you convene...To me that's very interesting.

F: We do!

D: You convened an entire discussion.

F: We do! We needed the governments to go and sit down because we can't. We need them to go and sit down and say 'da da da.' But you already line up the thing, you input in terms of the content that they're going to speak to. We do! We do it all the time which is why it's important for the masses to be with us as NGOs, as-as national organizations. It is important for the masses to be with us. They must be part of the thing. Every time we-we sit down, people in-in community based organizations or just generally umm people who have an interest in these things they must be part of it. The more people see how these things can be done, the more they are going to do it in their own organizations, in their own communities, in the country. Then no politician ain't coming to tell you 'come line up by me 4 o'clock in the morning to come and see me for some work or some house or some damn stupidity.' No no no no, people will say 'no no no no.' That's not how it...that's-that's-that was not the contract sir. 'Bring yourself here', you know? (Laughs). No I'm very clear in my head that we do. We do make policy. You ain't jumping out outside there and say 'da da da da da da!' But if that's what you want, you have to find a way to get it.

D: Folade, I've had you here, it was...it was day it is now night, tell me anything that you find that you've learnt in particular. Any obstacles that...

F: Along the way yes. I mean no I mean these things can be...So I mean even within the ATT process, one of the painful things for me was I suppose I see it and I knew it was going to happen, I just get kind of tired of it, and then I became disgusted with myself that I allowed myself to be disappointed. I find that we, Caribbean people and Caribbean activists, we are not sufficiently strong with maintaining our independence when we're relating to other NGO people.

D: You mean international?

F: Yes, yes. You know, I look at how easy it was for the Control Arms people to say to some of our people they would bring them to a meeting and I'm saying 'what you going there for? You coming for people to put you on showcase like...' You know that's one thing I'm very strong on. Every time you go to write something about this region, and Oh God it does irritate the life out of them, I'm sorry I can't change that. Every time you go to write something about this region, I would give you something positive about this region to write. You see this business about we catching we ass inside of here, we killing one another everyday, thing bad, we ain't have money, we-we poor, we-we-we...I don't go for that you know. I'm very sorry. No matter what you ask me about my people I will tell you 'We have a high level of gun homicide in Trinidad and Tobago and this is the reason. Da da da da da da.' And same breath I'm telling you that, I'm telling you what can be done about it. We must never be less than. You know, you cannot...(laughs) I mean the history of this region you going outside and letting people fool you with some meeting, to pay for you to come to some meeting for them to careen you all over the place as if...no no no no no no. So I-I... that is one of the things that disturbs me. Umm I really wish that we would not...

D: The way we represent ourselves?

F: The way we represent ourselves, sometimes it's not it's-it's-it's not sufficiently strong and proud and you know? And grounded. And I just think that that's what you are! So that's the way you should be presented. And I remember when Luanna was at one of those meetings with me she said 'but Folade look at the images.' They were making this presentation to the big assembly and they had these images and all the images of the Africans, this thing Oh God looking emaciated. I look at that and I say 'not where I come from, they ain't getting that. And to this day no matter what they try, I will not give them those stories. I will tell you that we have problems, you know? Like I say I'll tell you why and what should be done but no, no, we're much more than that you know? I'm not saying that we don't have that but if I'm presenting myself, we are much more than that and I have a responsibility to present who I am and... Because sometimes your circumstances has nothing to do with who you are. That's a passing... you know? So if you keep presenting this no... it's not coming out of WINAD sorry.

And it's something that I would say to people in the organization all the time. This work on gun violence, I mean as you know I've-I've had to lead that work eh umm and I think that one of the things I've learnt is how...I've learnt, I've learnt how to share sort of glory and-and that kind of thing umm but I've also learnt how fear has different faces, you know? Umm I have never been scared of doing this work. And I remember very early Denise De Bique used to call me 'Gun lady, gun lady but who send you in that? Oh God!' Umm but I've never, I've never been afraid. I mean no matter who I go by, you know, sometimes you know how kind of testy, you go by them fellas you don't know at what point somebody go jump out and come for them and all this. But I've never been afraid to do, to do this work. Umm...

D: When you say them fellas you're talking about the...

F: Yes.

D: Okay, community leaders.

F: Yes and I've been all kinds of places to find them. That's a next group again I had to go and find. You talk about steups. That little boy down in-in umm where he from? In Maraval there. That boy made me come by him three times.

D: I know we're supposed to be ending but I cannot understand how you used to get into these spaces!

F: How I used to get into these spaces? Because when people know the work you're doing, they are going to come to you and umm Martha come to me she said 'Folade, it have one of them I want you to meet' because she knew I was already meeting with... 'It had one of them, this one down there and thing thing thing thing'. I say 'alright, let we go.' She say 'alright I'll call and make the arrangements.' She call, we went down there, the first day we went, he ain't there, the tenant say 'he ain't there.' So-so I just, I say... well I wasn't surprised. She say 'but what time he coming?' 'I ain't know when he coming, I now going and meet him.' So she said umm 'well then we go come with you.' Tall, dark fella, he looked down at Martha 'you want to drive in car with gunman?' (Laughs) well of course in that moment you can't laugh! I was... if you see how that boy watch the girl and say 'Miss lady you mad? You want to drive in car with gunman?...' (laughs).

We went back a next day, he ain't there. Well the third time I say 'here's what'...and the joke about it is that you can't get up by him you know. From down below there is a sentry. So I said 'so here's what this is the third time I come here. I'm not leaving you know.' He responds -'Oh God Mother.' I say 'eh eh, not today.' 'I go sit down. Sit down on the, on the drain' (laughs).' Sit down on the drain! Hungry! Heat! Tired! Story story. You know when the little crook pass, he come up in a car, when he pass me he was ducked down in the car (laughs) and then went up in the ranch peeping down at me and checking me out. And then took his good sweet time to come down. 'Mother'. I talk to him normal normal normal. I say 'alright' (kisses teeth). All kind of thing.

D: Last words Folade, last words to Caribbean feminists organizing.



F: Oh Jesus.

D: Alright Folade. Last words for policy making.

F: I...but I would be happier I think if umm Caribbean feminists just kind of understand that women... women are advocating on their own behalf. As feminists, what we do is add value to what work they do, what plans they have. But people don't wait for you to come and save them and I think that what we need to look at our work as, as adding value to women's lives because I think that if you look at it in that way it allows you to-to value what they bring too because everybody brings something. Mine might look different to yours but everybody's bringing something.

D: So I know I said the last question was the last question but I want to...we started with the personal and it's a question I always wanted. You answer your phone Alafia, what does that mean?

F: It just means greetings. It's a, it's a Yoruba...it is a Yoruba term means umm greetings. Yes. I live my belief you know. I live the things I believe in not fussy, simple, I just believe in these things, I good so. So people thing don't burn my eye (laughs). I believe in those things and umm in NJAC as well one of the things that was really important... You notice we started and I'm-I'm going back there at the, at the end too because NJAC has really shaped my life, my belief system, the whole works. One of the things that-that you learnt was humility. So I am not by nature a humble woman. Nope. But I know how to apply it. Most times I apply it at the right time, sometimes I don't (laughs) apply it at the right time but yes -I believe in people, I really believe in people. That's one of the things I'm really proud of is Asha<sup>34</sup>. Yes she has a level of respect for people, she could live with people, she could roll kind of thing. Somethings she ain't, but she has a genuine love and respect for people. And that's one of the things that I really really am proud of that we were able to get her to be like that you know?

D: You're always thinking intergenerationally.

F: I think that's what life is.

D: That's interesting.

F: The people who paved the way for me. You know I tell you... like I tell you, I listen to people now talking about 'our people and my people...' Umm 'the Indian and them have and we have to get more land and...' And I say, 'What utter nonsense is this these people carrying on with?' I served in NJAC where if you got caught in a roadblock in the night in some kind of place... I mean, they wouldn't even read about you in the papers because they were not going to find you. So... and so you learn, you learn how important it is really to rely on people, to have faith and trust in people. When I hear people talk about trust no one I cannot understand that. I cannot understand that. I can't see life without trust. No matter who it is. I always say I will get my head bounce up because I start off trusting you. Every time you hear me say 'it's not me and you and thing thing' it's because something happened. But I start off trusting. Because I just think that that's what, that's what life is about and that's what I bring to my work. Umm pride, joy in people and seeing things-things, people benefit from things that they're supposed to.

I think that's why the ATT was so important for me because when I listened to how people were referring to us I said 'no, that can't happen.' And so that visibility in that security debate (kisses teeth), we don't have to worry no more! If they're going to have a discussion about security they'll say 'ey where CARICOM?' (Laughs) and we have fifteen votes which we must always remember.

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<sup>1</sup> Folade Mutota is the Executive Director of the Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD) and the 2017 winner of Trinidad & Tobago's Medal for the Development of Women (Gold).

<sup>2</sup> Caribbean Black Power was a movement for radical change of the social and economic system of the Caribbean. While Caribbean Black Power possessed an autonomy rooted in indigenous movement for black self-assertion, it questioned the capacity of the independence movements to deliver an end to inequities such as racial privileging, real economic and social improvement and more democratic politics (Meeks 2014)

<sup>3</sup> Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD) is a civil society organization which was founded in 1991 by Folade Mutota, Sattie Narace and Jillian Duncan. Much of WINAD's work is committed to strengthening the capacity of women and social consciousness among women and girls to lead social transformation in Trinidad & Tobago (<https://www.winad.org>).

<sup>4</sup> Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD) is a civil society organization which was founded in 1991 by Folade Mutota, Sattie Narace and Jillian Duncan. Much of WINAD's work is committed to strengthening the capacity of women and social consciousness among women and girls to lead social transformation in Trinidad & Tobago (<https://www.winad.org>).

<sup>5</sup> National Joint Action Committee (NJAC) was formed in February 1969 from a federation of organizations. NJAC has been at the forefront of the movement for a New Society in Trinidad & Tobago and the Caribbean. But the impact of the mass movement lead by NJAC and its ideological direction left a permanent influence on the society and had reverberations throughout the Caribbean.

<sup>6</sup> Makandal Daaga, born Geddes Granger in 1935. He was a Trinidad and Tobago political activist and former revolutionary. Daaga was the leader of the 1970 Black Power Revolution. During the unrest he was arrested and charged. In February 1969, Granger founded the NJAC National Joint Action Committee, a now-quiet political party. In 2013 Daaga was awarded the Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (ORTT). Daaga died on 8 August 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Ako Mutota was Folade's husband. Together they parent her daughter Asha.

<sup>8</sup> Laventille is a ward of Trinidad and Tobago, located immediately east of Port of Spain. Laventille is probably the oldest community in East Port of Spain. It has been said, whenever the enslaved peoples escaped from man's inhumanity to man, they headed to the Hills of Laventille. Used as inspiration for works such as Lovelace's the Dragon Can't Dance, Laventille has a long history of cultural significance to the history of Trinidad & Tobago, including being the birth place of the steel pan. In recent years, Laventille has become synonymous with high levels of crime. The name has also been used as a general term for the neighbourhoods of eastern Port of Spain, including not only Laventille "proper" (Success Village, Trou Macaque, Never Dirty) but also East Dry River, John-John, Sea Lots, Beetham Gardens, Caledonia, Maryland, Mon Repos, Chinapoo and Morvant.

<sup>9</sup> The United National Congress (UNC) is one of the two major political parties in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and one of the main parties in the current opposition. It was founded by Basdeo Panday, a lawyer and former trade unionist. The UNC was formed as the result of a split in the ruling National Alliance for Reconstruction in 1988. The UNC is largely an East Indian led and based political party.

<sup>10</sup> The intergenerational project is a WINAD mentorship initiative entitled, Becoming a Big Sister: Make a Difference in a Girls Life. Professional women between the ages of 25 - 40 were paired with younger girls to form a healthy mentoring relationship.

<sup>11</sup> Trinidadian term for hanging out.

<sup>12</sup> Guy refers to Hilton Guy, Commissioner of Police in Trinidad & Tobago 1998-2003

<sup>13</sup> Jules Bernard, Commissioner of Police in Trinidad & Tobago 1978-1987

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<sup>14</sup> “allyuh” (Trinidadian English) – “you all” or colloquially “y'all.”

<sup>15</sup> Randolph U. Burroughs Commissioner of Police in Trinidad & Tobago 1978-1987. For many Trinidadians Burroughs represented that strong hand recruited by the State to eliminate the Black Power constituency throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

<sup>16</sup> The Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) is a special unit within the Trinidad & Tobago Police Service, launched in September 2012, mandated to reduce crimes, especially murder. IATF concentrated its activities in areas such as Laventille, Beetham Gardens, and Sea Lots (Joint Select Committee 2013, 23).

<sup>17</sup> 1990 refers to the attempted coup in Trinidad, which was led by the Jamaat al Muslimeen.

<sup>18</sup> International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) is the global movement against gun violence, linking civil society organizations working to stop the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (<http://www.iansa.org/aboutus>).

<sup>19</sup> Caribbean Coalition for Development and the Reduction of Armed Violence (CDRAV) was the outcome of a 2008 workshop on civil society's response to crime and violence in the Caribbean. Workshop participants included civil society organizations from 7 CARICOM countries (Anyanwi 2014, 69). WINAD served as the secretariat for CDRAV.

<sup>20</sup> References a coalition lobby with the expressed goal of repealing the legality of child marriages in Trinidad and Tobago, [http://www.winad.org/45\\_Exception\\_to\\_the\\_age\\_of\\_marria](http://www.winad.org/45_Exception_to_the_age_of_marria) accessed 11/05/17

<sup>21</sup> Eden Charles is a career diplomat, posted to the Trinidad and Tobago Permanent Mission to the United Nations in 2005. Charles was later appointed Ambassador to the mission.

<sup>22</sup> A dental fricative used to express disgust, annoyance or dismissal.

<sup>23</sup> “Bad” here is not intended to connote “corrupt,” rather, the usage is intended to convey having a reputation for a no-nonsense approach.

<sup>24</sup> Martin Joseph held the office of Minister of National Security (2003-2010).

<sup>25</sup> At this point Folade is identifying the futility of the state's propensity to see the increased use of guns by the police as the appropriate response to gun violence.

<sup>26</sup> Permanent Secretary (PS)

<sup>27</sup> Patrick Manning held the office of Prime Minister for the periods 1991-1995 and 2001 -2010.

<sup>28</sup> Bill refers to Sean ‘Bill’ Francis, a reputed gang leader from Morvant, just east of Port of Spain. Bill died in April 2009 (<http://www.guardian.co.tt/archives/news/crime/2009/06/09/second-accused-sean-francis-killing-court>).

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<sup>29</sup> This 2004 meeting referred to was a meeting convened by WINAD at the Royal Palm Hotel and Conference Centre in Maraval, a suburb west of Port of Spain. Invited to this meeting was a cross-section of community/'gang' leaders, some religious leaders and other men of influence within vulnerable communities in Trinidad and Tobago. WINAD members convened this meeting because they were convinced that the conversation among these groups was fundamental to making a difference in how we understood the movement of guns and their influence on the quality of life in some communities. The meeting was a watershed moment in WINAD's work on gun violence in Trinidad and Tobago. It was also significant to the community/'gang' leaders at that time. They began to recognize the place of their voice framing a national response to gun violence. The meeting also complicated WINAD's activism, because it soundly placed the group as power brokers on both sides of the legal divide of gun violence in Trinidad and Tobago. Additionally the human face of gun violence became evident on both sides of this divide, providing new insight and complex responsibilities for any civil society actor attempting to engage in this work.

<sup>30</sup> Nelcia Robinson, former coordinator for the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) (1996-2009).

<sup>31</sup> Biche is a rural community located in the east of Trinidad. It is 18 kilometers south of Sangre Grande in the east and 18 kilometers north of Rio Claro in the South. 2014/2015 WINAD partnered with the Institute for Gender and Development Studies the UWI St Augustine, Rape Crisis Centre and Women Working for Social Justice to undertake the project entitled the Women's Conversation Caravan. The Caravan was an important research initiative and Biche was the first community the Caravan visited. The project offered insight into:

- How geography, race, socio-economics and other frames produce different definitions and positions on the same issue.
- It interrogates and orders personal, community-based, national development priorities through the lens of women's lived experience.
- It allows women to speak with NGOs and academic partners in the field of women and gender to shape policy, programming and future research to advance gender equity and equality in Trinidad and Tobago.
- The Conversations create a collaborative space for women's organizations beyond the two lead organizations to reconcile the project and programming activity of their respective organizations with the needs of diverse constituencies of women across the nations (Mutota & McFee, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> URP- Unemployment Relief Programme is designed to provide short term employment for unemployed citizens of Trinidad & Tobago

<sup>33</sup> CEPEP- Community-Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme – similar to URP, but originally designed to build self-sustainable companies from the services being offered by workers.

<sup>34</sup> Asha Mutota is Folade's daughter.